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# MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SPEECHES

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# MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SPEECHES

EDITED BY CHARLES W. BOYD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE RIGHT HON.
AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.

VOLUME I

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Wilt thou do the deed and repent it? thou hadst
better never been born:
Wilt thou do the deed and exalt it? then thy fame
shall be outworn:
Thou shalt do the deed and abide it, and sit on thy
throne on high,
And look on today and tomorrow as those that
never die.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

# INTRODUCTION

EARLY this year the publishers of these volumes inquired whether my father would be willing that they should reproduce a selection from his speeches. The idea pleased him, and he was gratified by Mr. Boyd's ready consent to undertake the task of selection and presentation. He accordingly placed at Mr. Boyd's disposal the scrap books in which had been collected the newspaper reports of his speeches from the beginning to the end of his long public life. The choice made from this vast mass of material is Mr. Boyd's. No restrictions or conditions of any kind have been imposed upon him. The principle which has guided his selection is explained in his prefatory note. It was to make the collection 'representative of the full sweep of a long and famous career.' It will, I think, be found that he has admirably fulfilled this promise.

It was my father's wish that I should prefix a few words of introduction to the collection. The time has not yet come, nor in any case am I the proper person, to measure exactly all he did and all he was, but these speeches will show something of the man, of his character, and of his achievements. He cared little about charges of inconsistency, and no attempt is made here to gloss over any change of thought or method. But I believe with him that through all his years of unceasing growth and widening outlook on men and things there was an underlying consistency of spirit and of purpose which gives unity to the whole.

He had a deep sympathy with suffering. He hated wrong and injustice in any form. He loved his country

passionately, and had a great faith in his countrymen here and beyond the seas. These were the great forces working in his heart and shaping his career.

For many years of his life he stood in the van of the Radical ranks. He supplied in large measure the driving force of the reform movements of the time. His speech was always direct and clear. No man was ever left in doubt as to his meaning or his object. But he did not pause to supply all the qualifications which caution might suggest or to mention all the conditions of which the legislator must take account. It was his business, as he saw it in those days, to make reform inevitable. There would be no lack of others to apply the brakes and to prevent the progress from being too rapid.

From first to last he was a great reformer, and a great Imperialist. The two passions were not always easy to reconcile amidst the exigencies of party warfare, and loyalty to colleagues often caused him to shoulder responsibility for things which, if he could have had his way, would have been ordered differently. He claimed and used a wide freedom in discussing the policy of the future, but he accepted full responsibility for the acts of the Governments of which he was a member, and colleagues from whom he differed, no less than those with whom he agreed, have borne testimony to his perfect loyalty and generous support. He recognised, moreover, that statesmanship is in part a question of opportunity, and he knew that to achieve great results he must work with and through a party. But party was to him only a means to an end. It never became the end itself. He would do much for party which he would never do for himself, but strong party man as he was counted to be, he would never sacrifice his public duty as he saw it for any party or personal advantage.

Another characteristic is clearly marked in these speeches.

His was always a constructive brain. Pulling down had no attractions for him unless it was to put something better in the place of that which was removed. His aim was to raise men up, not to cast them down; to construct and unite, not to destroy; and only those who came into intimate contact with him knew the amount of labour which he devoted to his schemes of reform before he spoke a word of them in public. He would advocate nothing which he had not satisfied himself could be done. He did not wish to raise hopes that would be disappointed, and he made sure before he moved that, if his ideas commended themselves to his countrymen, they were capable of practical application.

But in recalling the qualities which made him what he was, I place first that strong sense of duty which was his guiding light in every act of his life, public or private. He taught the obligations of duty to his children, and in the same spirit he taught them to his constituents in West Birmingham, to his countrymen in Great Britain, and to the citizens of the Empire wherever his voice could reach. I think next of his absolute fearlessness. What he thought right he did. What he held to be true he said, be the consequences to himself what they might. I call to mind his tenacity of purpose. In youth he chose as his motto, 'Je tiens ferme.' No motto ever better fitted its wearer. No matter what the difficulties, no matter what his discouragements, once he had seen his way and chosen it, once he had laid his hand to the plough, he never turned back, and he never regretted the sacrifices that his view of duty might entail upon him. He never lost faith. His courage never drooped, and in the darkest days he could find words of inspiration and encouragement for others. These are great qualities. There are others that helped to make him the man he was. He had the great gift of imagination, without

which the highest statesmanship is not possible. From his youth onward he was one of those who see visions and dream dreams. Some of them have come true in his city, some have come true in our country, some have come true already in the Empire. But he never rested. To his last day he seemed too young to be content to leave things as they are. The motto of Birmingham, 'Forward,' inspired his life. He was ever for moving forward, with reverence for the past and care to guard its great traditions, but ever seeking in the future something better, something greater, something nobler than the present.

A few words may be added as to the preparation and delivery of these speeches. Some of my father's most successful speeches were delivered on the spur of the moment, without a note or with only such rough jottings as could be pencilled down while an opponent was speaking. But when time was given he thought no pains too great to secure the most direct and perfect presentation of his case. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might'; and again, 'If a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well,' were maxims of conduct which he early impressed on his children, and no one ever practised them more faithfully than himself. He felt it an obligation to give his best to the audiences which did him the honour to come to hear him, and he grudged neither time nor labour necessary for the purpose. His voice was singularly clear and musical and never monotonous; even its lowest tones carried to the furthest corner of any building in which he spoke. There seemed always to be power in reserve. He used little action, but that little was appropriate to what he said, and his Birmingham audiences learned to watch the play of feature with the close attention which its interest and significance repaid. In the course of the fine tribute paid

to his memory by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, Mr. Asquith said :

> 'Mr. Chamberlain was the pioneer of a new generation. He brought with him from the world of business and of municipal life a freshness of outlook, a directness of purpose, and a certain impatience of conventional and circuitous methods. He may be said with truth to have introduced and perfected a new style of speaking, equally removed from that of either of the great masters of speech who then had the ear of the House and the nation, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright. If he kept, as a rule, closer to the ground, he rarely digressed, and he never lost his way. He had, indeed, at his disposal all the resources, natural and acquired, of an accomplished artist, not excluding raillery, sarcasm, and invective. But more perhaps—so at least it seems to me—than any orator of our time he gave the impression of complete and serene command, both of his material and of himself, and as has been the case with not a few great men, his speech, and the fashion and mode of his speech, was with him the expression and revelation of character. In that striking personality, vivid, masterful, resolute, tenacious, there were no blurred or nebulous outlines, there were no relaxed fibres, there were no moods of doubt and hesitation, and there were no pauses of lethargy or fear.'

To him, as to Chatham, speech was a form of action. He valued the triumphs of the platform and of Parliament only as they formed opinion and led to action. And so the speech was the man—simple, direct, sincere, courageous, prompt in decision and resolute in action.

AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

HIGHBURY, *July* 14, 1914.

*'In the course of this interval of nearly thirty years, to which for a moment I look back, momentous changes have taken place in the constitution and situation of this kingdom—public opinion has altered greatly on many of the questions which occupied it at the beginning of the period—false judgments have been corrected, and new ideals have been formed—the leaders and teachers of my youth have most of them passed away, and we can now estimate their characters uninfluenced by the heat of the controversies which they provoked, and can judge them impartially in the light of the results which they achieved.*

*'When so much has altered—persons, opinions, and circumstances—I should think it a poor boast to pretend that I alone had remained unchanged; but in view of the confidence that you have now vouchsafed to me, I ask you to believe that, through all the vicissitudes of things, I have consistently sought—it may be sometimes with faltering steps and by mistaken roads—the greatness of the Empire and the true welfare of the people at large.'*—GLASGOW UNIVERSITY, RECTORIAL ADDRESS, November 3, 1897.

# EDITOR'S NOTE

THESE volumes aim at a selection from the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain, representative not of any single period, but of the full sweep of a long and famous career. Mr. Chamberlain entered the House of Commons in 1876, after a distinguished course in municipal politics such as would have been enough for most men. He ceased from public activity in 1906. During thirty years, forty if you include his municipal work, he seemed to speak incessantly—no man better, more active in public speaking. Obviously not more than a sheaf of his speeches can here be given, omissions there must be which readers may resent; but any economy exercised is quantitative, and no attempt has been made to smooth over unevennesses or to reconcile apparent inconsistencies.

Mr. Chamberlain's history, the history of his life and actions and opinions, is conspicuously a tale of growth and development. He was always inquiring, learning, broadening. That is the invaluable and heartening 'moral' of his career, which it is thought that this record may illustrate. Yet his development involved no change of principle. Only the biased and superficial are likely to echo the parrot-cry of partisan opponents that here was a Radical who weakened in his faith and became a convert to Toryism. With Mr. Chamberlain, change of party and point of view has been no effect of revolution—things changed; he grew. Of the careers of few statesmen in this country's history can the same thing be said in equal degree. This may sound paradoxical, when we recollect that he who was lately the foremost fighter in the ranks of the Unionist Party, as he is still its inspiration, was once the rising formidable hope of the starkest Radicals. The parliamentary colleague of John Bright, the friend and ally of John Morley, these protagonists of the anti-

Imperialist tradition, became the great captain of Imperialism in this country and in the Dominions. The contrast, for what it signifies, is here not blinked. Speeches are reprinted which must seem to offer a contrast, striking enough, between the years just before and after 1880 with Mr. Gladstone's return to power, and those from 1886 onwards. Yet on a fair perusal of these speeches the inconsistency is superficial rather than real. Accepting the conditions of practical usefulness in parliamentary life, Mr. Chamberlain was what is called a good party man. 'It is of the essence of our representative institutions,' he said at Birmingham in 1880, 'that we should have Party Government; and the lines of party, if they are not defined by politics, would be fixed for something less honourable, and less definite; they must be fixed by local prejudice or personal preference; and if you have lesser issues in place of the greater I believe that you will find that there will be less extended interest in the work to be done. There will be inferior character in the representatives.' This was his view even in municipal politics; in the wider area, concurring with his party in (say) two-thirds of any common policy it was probably Mr. Chamberlain's way loyally to shut his eyes and bolt the remaining third. Do not good party men do this, not only without grimaces, even avowing how excellent they find the action?

That, like it or not, is part and parcel of the blessing or curse of the party system, to some people the noblest work of man, but affecting others as something almost at odds with clear knowledge and clear purpose, 'temporary, accidental, a mere stop-gap—like a gipsy's roundabout in a place where one will presently build a house.'[1] Going his party's way, Mr. Chamberlain, from the time that he entered Parliament until his final rupture with the official Liberals, was, of course, just as responsible as any member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet for features of policy difficult and impossible to reconcile with that which guided him in a subsequent hour of perhaps greater knowledge, but at any

[1] H. G. Wells.

rate of greater responsibility. The Majuba policy of 1881 and the Convention of Pretoria will occur to most minds; and some of us remember how, when taxed with this in later years in the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain frankly admitted his share of responsibility for a policy which with the knowledge he then possessed he believed to be right. It is recalled how, on his South African journey in 1902-3, Mr. Chamberlain was in talk with a famous colonial man of science, who said to him, of the Government policy of 1881, 'In those days I 'm afraid I didn't like your African views.' 'No,' said the Colonial Secretary, 'and the worst of it is that you were in the right.' In this case, the change of view was open and confessed. He had shared what we should call the anti-Imperialist conviction, had helped in his day to ensue an anti-Imperialist policy detestable to the British of the Dominions, and he did not deny it.

Yet all during the period referred to, it is doubtful whether, on questions of colonial and foreign policy, Mr. Chamberlain's attitude, as compared with the average among his colleagues, was whole-hearted. Generally speaking, his views on affairs out of England were known to coincide in large measure with those of another extreme Radical, who was also confessedly a strong Imperialist, Sir Charles Dilke. There is Lord Granville's familiar description of Mr. Chamberlain in the 'eighties as 'almost the greatest Jingo in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet.' But it is not so well known that, as early as 1886, when he refused the Admiralty and accepted the Local Government Board, the office which he most wished for was that of Secretary of State for the Colonies. And while on general lines he was an adherent of Free Trade whose speeches were more than once issued as pamphlets by the Cobden Club, it is plain that the principle of State Socialism embodied in the municipal reforms at Birmingham, pleaded for in the earlier parliamentary speeches, and embodied again in the administrative policy of the President of the Board of Trade in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, was incompatible with the position of an orthodox Free Trader. In 1895 Mr.

Chamberlain was voting with an overt Protectionist like Sir Howard Vincent in favour of restricting the importation of goods made in foreign prisons. That vote has seemed inconsonant with the cherished principles of Mr. Cobden's followers; it is not nearly so inconsistent as was the tendency of the Unauthorised Programme.

It is indeed in his early municipal policy, and in the later and wider proposals towards reform—municipal socialism in the one case, state socialism in the other—that you have the key to at least one-half of the principles dominating Mr. Chamberlain's career. Strong in him was the desire to improve the daily lot of the poor, and not less strong his readiness to use legislation for the purpose of helping and protecting those who cannot help or protect themselves. That was his main principle and incentive in entering municipal life, his main principle and incentive in entering the House of Commons. The feeling burns in his speeches, whether you open them at some point in the full-fledged hot reforming epoch of the Unauthorised Programme, or turn over the statistical, eminently practical addresses in Birmingham Town Council. It lights such early speeches in the Commons as those on the Gothenburg system or on prison reform, the latter the occasion of an unforgotten pretty incident in the warfare of parties, when a venerable Tory member who had listened in amaze to the new-comer —eloquent indeed, but unlike his reputation—crossed the House and shook Mr. Chamberlain by the hand. The social incentive even determined Mr. Chamberlain's choice of party.[1] Since his youth the Church of England has changed out of recognition in many important respects, and not least in its attitude to the social question. They are Churchmen

[1] One who knew Mr. Chamberlain intimately in his early days in Birmingham has said that, at the outset, 'nobody was sure whether foreign policy would make him a Tory or home affairs a Radical.' But 'his first public interest was educational, and he had come to a Birmingham that it may be said had no education.' He who was presently to start classes at his own works, and to teach history, French, and arithmetic to other classes connected with a Unitarian Sunday-school, flung himself into the campaign for a national system. 'The Churchmen of Birmingham were hostile to that movement; its public life and civic spirit were Nonconformist.'

now—or friendly to the Church—who forty years ago were profoundly and convincedly its foes. And if you happened to have been bred a Unitarian sixty—or seventy—years since, your inherited boast that Nonconformity is in your blood, a martyr of Nonconformity your ancestor; more, if you have left school at sixteen, and, at eighteen, plunged into commerce in Birmingham without opportunity to enlarge, in this particular, the peculiar atmosphere in which you were brought up, you were not likely to regard the Church of England steadily or whole. Teaching after his day's work in a Unitarian night school, Mr. Chamberlain in youth conceived the Church for an establishment which kept back the working-class young men, his pupils, and as a vast engine of religious bigotry and religious oppression. Of the two parties in the State, the Liberals seemed less the servant of this oppressor, and to the Liberal party accordingly he adhered.

The same principle of social amelioration is present in such early speeches as that delivered in 1874 at the Annual Meeting of Hurst Street Chapel, to give one instance, or in the series—extreme in any day and reckoned ferocious in their own day—in which he impressed on public opinion the leading features of his own social programme in 1885. The harvest of his municipal reforms included the purchase by the Corporation of Birmingham of the gas-works which hitherto had lighted citizens, the purchase of the water-works and the sewage farm, and the immolation of the slums which then lay in the centre of the town. His earlier work in Parliament towards reform was concerned with licensing reform, prison reform, and with the laws in relation to bankruptcy and the system of patents, and the hardships they permitted; but more significant was Mr. Chamberlain's crusade, for it was no less, as President of the Board of Trade, on behalf of merchant seamen. If the Bill of May 1884 was thwarted—a reverse which Mr. Chamberlain felt so strongly that he asked Mr. Gladstone to accept his resignation from the Ministry forthwith—the legislative results which have since ensued on the lines of and in

consequence of this measure have been of inestimable service to the Mercantile Marine. Of the individual reforms proposed in the Radical programme,[1] or the distinct, less wholesale, and more temperate Unauthorised Programme, some indeed may have been 'scrapped' or shorn. The doctrine remains, and to its principal features Mr. Chamberlain is probably still an adherent. In much of it he long since could boast of unexpected converts. Conservative and Liberal are names which long ago ceased to have any true distinctive meaning. Already, before 1895, Mr. Chamberlain had admitted that the Conservatives rather than the Liberals had been the pioneers and promoters of social legislation. In his electoral address, issued after the dissolution of Parliament in 1895, he announced that the Unionist leaders had 'agreed to lay aside the wild schemes of Constitutional change and destructive legislation' which had constituted another programme, and proposed now to devote themselves to 'the policy of constructive social reform.' When we recollect that the principles of the Unauthorised Programme were esteemed too much for the Liberal Cabinet at the time they were brought forward, it seems a paradox indeed that great part of these principles should since have been embodied in legislation, under Conservative Prime Ministers. It is a remarkable illustration of the essential consistency underlying the apparent changes in Mr. Chamberlain's political creed and record.

Social reform, then, and Imperial development and organisation are the principles governing the speeches included in this volume, as they have governed Mr. Chamberlain's career. It will be seen, to repeat, that there is no suppression; change or reconsideration of opinion is not evaded, the earlier speeches on education with their attacks on the Church of England are here reprinted, and so are the best and most effective and excessive speeches delivered in the extreme Radical period between 1876 and 1886. It is

[1] Published in 1885. Mr. Chamberlain contributed a preface, but disclaimed further responsibility. It may be added that Mr. Chamberlain did not write any of the articles.

permissible to the reader to dislike the tone of these orations, though, compared with the achievement of later democratic orators, Mr. Chamberlain's vigour seems even to Tory ears innocuous and almost grandisonian. You have, no doubt, to grant the party game and system of which some of us may be no admirers. But whether they be adjudged right or wrong in their details, the schemes set forth in these, the most assailable of Mr. Chamberlain's public utterances, express the same unswerving desire to improve the condition of the mass of the people.

Nor is the Imperial question remotely connected with the social one. How far Mr. Chamberlain was drawn to his choice of office on the accession of the Unionist Party to power in 1895 by his sense of the adverse influence on the interests of the people at home of an inadequate foreign and colonial policy—this is an interesting speculation which need not detain us. But a very few weeks after entering the Colonial Office he expressed to a deputation of business men how necessary he felt it in the social interest of these islands that the resources of backward colonies should be developed to their fullest extent. 'It is only in such developments that I see any solution of the social problem with which we are surrounded. Plenty of employment and a contented people go together, and there is no way of securing plenty of employment except by creating new markets and developing the old ones.'

'Two qualifications,' he claimed at the outset of his tenure of office at the Colonial Office, when presiding at the 'send-off' dinner to the new Governor of West Australia. 'These qualifications are that, in the first place, I believe in the British Empire; and, in the second place, I believe in the British race. I believe that the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen. I say that not merely as an empty boast, but as proved and evidenced by the success which we have had in administering the vast dominions which are connected with these small islands, and I believe, therefore, that there are no limits to its future.'

The feeling implied in these words is illustrated in such speeches as that on the Commercial Union of the Empire, delivered before the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire in June 1896, and that delivered at the Colonial Institute in 1897 on the True Conception of Empire. From these the transition is short and easy to the consideration of that new development of an Imperial policy which was urged by Mr. Chamberlain with so much lucidity and courage until he could urge it no longer. That policy, that ideal, is summed up in his own words: 'That they who in past generations made a kingdom surpassed by none should now in altered circumstances and new conditions show themselves to be worthy of the leadership of the British race, and, in co-operation with their kinsmen across the sea, combine to make an Empire which may be, which ought to be, greater and more united, more fruitful for good than any Empire in human history.'

There is obvious difficulty in doing justice to Mr. Chamberlain as a speaker by any book of selection from his speeches. He of all men, 'drove at practice.' His object was to get certain things done. He was no idealogue. He spoke ever with a practical end in view, not at large and on general topics as men speak who would improve an occasion, and whose aim is to turn out an agreeable, perhaps an enduring, piece of literary work. The Glasgow Rectorial address on Patriotism, too long unhappily for more than a brief quotation, was a prelection of sustained and noble eloquence; but occasions like these in Mr. Chamberlain's career as an orator are rare. For the most part he was concerned with the matter in hand, and many of his most effective utterances are taken up with names and incidents now forgotten or irrelevant. At these the appreciation of posterity may boggle. Nor can we hope to convey to those who never heard him the mesmeric value of the speaker's personality, its effect as of a dexterous and shining blade in action. All that is withdrawn like the penetrating quality

of his clear low voice, or, amid the movement and stir of debate, the swift and adroit overthrow of an interrupting opponent.

But if not to be thrilled as were those of us who actually listened to Mr. Chamberlain, on the platform or in Parliament, there are certain aspects of these recorded utterances which posterity cannot miss: the immense grasp and thoroughness and pains with which the subject—often highly technical and complex—had been mastered by the speaker; the finished quality of an English, by choice less often eloquent than clear and well-proportioned, like the prose of a well-written dispatch, which, contrasting it with the slipshod of much contemporary speaking, people may be interested to remember was invariably taken down and printed word for word as it was delivered; above all, the speaker's peculiar gift of lucidity and arrangement, his undisputed habit and essential quality of directness, force, sincerity. These things remain, and surely remains also the impression of one penetrated by the sense of his responsibility, caring very much about England, of that *Man in Downing Street* on whom every tried, remotest official servant of the Empire securely reckoned; and in Downing Street or out of it, speaking from his heart in England's interest and in their interest who live to serve her.

C. W. Boyd.

*June* 1914.

# MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SPEECHES

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S speeches, chronologically arranged, fall naturally into certain sufficiently well-defined departments or stages: the early speeches of a remarkable municipal career, which closed practically in 1876 with his election to Parliament, although the connection with Birmingham Town Council was not severed formally until 1880; the period of 1876-86,—days of Radicalism, of an established and ever-rising position in the House of Commons and in the country, of the Board of Trade and much useful work in reform; the Home Rule controversy (which terminated Mr. Chamberlain's tenure of office until 1895), and his decisive part in it; the Colonial Secretaryship of 1895 and after, and speeches on foreign and colonial subjects germane to that position, though, in some cases, delivered before the speaker's accession to office; South Africa, in which Mr Chamberlain's relation to that question is illustrated—as it is believed it best can be—by excerpts from speeches delivered during his South African journey of 1902-3 on the conclusion of the war, with two speeches made in the House of Commons, one after President Kruger's ultimatum in October 1899, the other in the dark days of February 1900; and, finally, that great political movement towards the commercial and federal union of the British Empire which began with his return from South Africa, and was only arrested when in 1906 the speaker paid the price of his devotion in incapacitating illness.

## I. MUNICIPAL AND EARLY SPEECHES

The first part of these selections, then, includes a number of speeches delivered while a member of the Town Council of Birmingham, or, latterly, as Mayor of that city;

it closes on his election to the House and with his maiden speech. Mr. Chamberlain entered the Council in 1869, and was Mayor in 1873, being re-elected in 1874 and in 1875. Already he had attained much of his mature power as a public speaker from early training and assiduous practice in the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society, where the tradition lingers that Mr. Chamberlain's youthful professions hovered between what was known, but imperfectly understood, as Socialism, and what had not yet come to be called Imperialism. Beyond this, tradition unluckily is silent. In default of the very earliest of his speeches, these earliest recorded ones, given here, are concerned mainly with education, as politicians in the 'sixties and 'seventies understood the term; and are inspired by a vigorous hostility to the Church of England. That institution, as is observed above in the Editor's Note, Mr. Chamberlain sincerely deemed to be an engine of class prejudice and obstruction. 'The first time I ever saw Lord Rosebery,' says Sir J. M. Barrie, 'was in Edinburgh, when I was a student, and I flung a clod of earth at him. He was a peer; those were my politics.' In neither case does the view indicated strike one as being final. Given to-day the Church of his youth (so far as he was informed about her), Mr. Chamberlain would probably say that his attitude would still be equally hostile. Churchmen for their part might admit, in some respects at least, its relevancy and justice in 1870. To some minds the matter for regret is other. Here was a vast force, good-will, sincerity of purpose, conjoined with an unequalled faculty for 'getting things done.' And this was to be, so far, expended in the sectarian corridors, or in the melancholy main building of an educational system less productive of men and women trained in mind and body for the battle of life than of millions of more or less efficient clerks and scholars qualified to read the betting counsels of the half-penny papers. Who can suppose that the hopes entertained by so many excellent folk in 1870 have been fulfilled? The answer is in many signs of the times which bewilder and distress us. One

thing only is clear, how much remains to do; and those concerned for their country's welfare cannot think that the first requirements of their common task are satisfied until care for a child's health and mental and physical development is as much a matter of course as instruction; until education means for lads a definite, acquired fitness to earn their continuous livelihood at a craft, and for girls the capacity to discharge the duties of wife and mother.[1] Now, could he but have conceived of national education on a basis more closely answerable to our needs, there was one man in the public life of England in these past fifty years with the personal drive and force needful to have provided the physical and moral training due to vital ends,—to have organised the wholesale substitution of sane and employable men and women for the increasing percentage of the defective and the unemployable.

A crux and test of militant nonconformity in these days was Mr. Forster's Education Act of 1870 with its tempering of the wind to 'ecclesiasticism.' In the crusade against Mr. Forster the National Education League of Birmingham took a leading part, and in 1868 Mr. Chamberlain was elected chairman of the league, and his speech of March 7, 1870, in Birmingham Town Hall, sets forth its tenets. Another famous deliverance, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, two years later, expresses the discontent of Nonconformists with the result of the Act and with the Liberal leaders,—they themselves 'drifting back into darkness when they had thought they were emerging into the perfect day.' Whatever might be thought of the tone and temper of these speeches, there was no question of their effect, nor of the sincerity and ability of the speaker. These qualities carried him to the top of municipal affairs in the town of his adoption, and, even so, his nonconformity bore him on from municipal into Imperial politics. Elected as we have seen to the mayoralty in 1873, Mr. Chamberlain's re-election in 1874 and 1875 was disputed. He fought these municipal battles on purely political lines—at first unwillingly, for he

[1] Lord Milner, *The Nation and the Empire*, p. xliii.

pleaded that his opponents, the Conservatives, 'began it.' But, once committed to this fusion of municipal and Imperial politics on the regular party lines, Mr. Chamberlain never wavered. His majority made short work of their opponents, and established the Mayor as something of a dictator in Birmingham. On the other hand, they administered the affairs of the town with single and scrupulous eye for what they conceived to be the common good. His policy (writes one well authorised to speak) was: 'fight election on political grounds, but no politics when once in the Council.' A chief municipal supporter, the late Alderman Avory, afterwards Mayor, was a lifelong Conservative.

Now began the pioneer work of municipal socialism. In January 1874 the Mayor brought forward a scheme for the purchase by the Corporation of the gas-works which had lighted the town. The step was revolutionary, and the decision of the Council must be confirmed by the voice of a great meeting of the citizens. The purchase of the water-works followed in like manner, the quality of the water was improved, and its cost reduced for consumers. The town sewage farm, and, more, the slums lying in the centre of Birmingham were cleared. The complicated financial side of these schemes was looked at askance, but the policy proved sound in finance—and in other respects proved something more. Birmingham at this date, in Mr. Chamberlain's words, when looking back years after, was 'a town in which scarcely anything had been done either for the instruction or the health or the comfort or convenience of the population.' The gain to Birmingham of the Chamberlain regime, in fact, was undeniable and not denied. It is worth remarking that its author has placed it on record that the success of Birmingham is no reason for treating London as a civic unit. He limits the socialist enterprise of municipalities to those things which the community can do better than the private individual. To do more is to run risks—risks of bureaucrats substituted for elected members of the Council, as the work of superintendence grows too heavy for volun-

tary workmen; risks of extravagance, of multiplied employment; of bidding for popularity by the offer of higher wages than the market affords. If a corporation does these things 'it is entering on the downward path which has conducted so many American municipalities to their ruin.'

The various speeches in which Mr. Chamberlain brought in his several schemes of municipal reform have been found too technical and occasional for reproduction here. But references to the work of social reform in general are frequent in the extracts made under this period; and the address before the Birmingham Conference of January 13, 1875, on the sanitation of great towns illustrates Mr. Chamberlain's attitude in these days and the ideals which he carried to practical realisation.

# I. MUNICIPAL AND EARLY SPEECHES

## EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 7, 1870

MR. MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN,—The resolution which I have been asked to move is as follows: 'That this meeting, while rejoicing that Her Majesty's Ministers have introduced into Parliament a Bill to provide for public education in England and Wales, regrets that the Bill contains clauses which will create unnecessary delay in the establishment of schools; will leave some districts entirely without responsible School Boards; will require payment of school fees from parents who have contributed to the rates; will not ensure compulsory attendance in districts where it is most required; and will give to School Boards power to pay for theological teaching. And this meeting believes that no system will deserve or receive the support of the country that does not make immediate provision for free, unsectarian, compulsory education, supported by local rates, supplemented by Government grants, under local representative management and Government inspection, and sufficient for the requirements of all children in the country.' Now, sir, I think it will be obvious that this resolution does not commit this meeting to a position of hostility and opposition to Her Majesty's Government. Nor do I think that it is necessary for us to take such a position, for I have great confidence in the honesty of purpose of our present ministers, and I believe they will carry out the ascertained wishes of the great mass of the people; and I gladly acknowledge the prompt recognition of those wishes which has led them to give so prominent a place in the Queen's Speech, and in the business of the session, to this great question of education—the greatest of all the internal reforms that we

have looked for from a Liberal Government in the new House of Commons. And, sir, I have also seen with pleasure the official acceptance of the great principles of compulsory and unsectarian education; and I only regret that Mr. Forster, in face of a certain kind of opposition, has hesitated to carry out these principles to their logical and legitimate conclusion. The opinion which I have formed of the Government Bill in its present condition is similar to the estimate which Captain Cuttle held on the qualities of his celebrated watch. You may remember that he said of that instrument that, 'if you put it for'ard half an hour every morning, and another quarter toward the afternoon, it was a watch as would do you credit.' And I say that if the ministry will consent to put this measure of education a little forward, it is one that will be a credit to its authors and to the intelligence of the people by whom it has been amended. As this Bill stands at present it has been hailed with great satisfaction by the Conservative party. That no doubt is a very gratifying fact; but at the same time it is a little suspicious, because unfortunately we have not been accustomed to have the friendly co-operation of the Tories in the passage of measures which we have believed calculated to secure the material advancement and the intelligence of the great mass of the people. It seems to me, therefore, that their satisfaction requires a word or two of explanation. I have seen that the other day Mr. Melly, the member for Stoke, speaking at Longton, said that this Bill contained immense probabilities of good and great possibilities of evil; and he said that the Liberals accepted it because of its probable good, and the Tories because of its possible evil. That may be a little uncharitable, and at all events I think another explanation is possible. I think that although this Bill is in direct contradiction to many of the principles which the Tories have set up as their guide on this matter, yet it is at the same time so much less liberal and so much less drastic than they had feared, that in their joy over what they had saved they forgot the losses they had sustained; and they may be likened to the ship's crew whose captain

said of them that he had left them the happiest fellows in the world, for he had just flogged seventeen of them, and they were glad it was over, and the rest were glad because they had escaped. Now, whatever the explanation may be, I hope it will be obvious to this meeting that a Bill which has given intense satisfaction to the Tories requires a little revision and amendment at the hands of the Radical party; and the nature of the amendments it requires is indicated in the resolution which I have the honour to move. In the first place, we object to a Bill which proposes, in cases where educational destitution has been conclusively established, that the denominations may supply the deficiency. Now this provision has been dictated by what is called tenderness for the existing system. I want to know what is this existing system? It has been tried for thirty years, and has been found wanting. What is there in it that we should show tenderness towards it? What is there in it that we should give it twelve months' grace?—a twelve months that might be made productive of instruction to hundreds and thousands of children. I have upon this point an opinion which I think will have authority with our opponents. It is the opinion of a late Cabinet Minister in the Conservative Government. Sir John Pakington says: 'Looking at it (the denominational system) as a national system, he had always regarded it as a clumsy contrivance. He had always thought that if the statesmen of England had devoted their minds to establish a system of national education, they certainly would never have devised such a system as the denominational.' Why, then, are we to give twelve months' delay to this clumsy contrivance which no statesman would ever have devised? I have another opinion from another Cabinet Minister, to whose words we are accustomed to pay even greater reverence than to those which fall from the lips of Sir John Pakington—John Bright. Speaking the other day, in this hall, he said: 'The denominational system was just one of those arrangements made because something must necessarily be done, and it was very difficult to do it otherwise. But it is obvious with this system nearly all the

Government money goes to the Established Church, because the Nonconformist churches are not one body, but several bodies. They are not united, and possibly never can unite to form a great community for educational purposes. Therefore, if you give a million of money from the State for purposes of education, the great bulk of it goes to that half of the population which is a powerful and united body, and the other half, which is, though powerful, altogether disunited, will find itself in the position of almost getting nothing.' Now, why are we to perpetuate this unjust system? And why are we to give twelve months' grace to the denominations, in order that they may run a race of wasteful expenditure to extend those religious animosities which we all deplore? The next objection we take to this Bill is of greater importance. We object to the extension of permissive legislation. There are provisions in the Bill permitting School Boards to provide for compulsory attendance, to provide under certain conditions free schools, to grant free tickets, and, finally, there is permission to teach one religion or all religions or no religion at their option or will. I want to know what these unfortunate local authorities have done—what crimes the Town Councils and vestries and select vestries have committed that Mr. Forster should throw this apple of discord into their midst, and make the annual election a scene of the bitterest feelings and the most violent animosities. Mr. John Stuart Mill said that it is the province of the Government to lay down principles, and it is the duty of the Government to leave the application of those principles to local management; and it does seem to me that this permissive legislation is rather the sign of a weak Government than of that strong Government we thought we had erected, and which we were supporting with our whole power. If compulsion be right, let us take care that it be made uniform and secure as a right to all, not one law for Birmingham and another for Smethwick or Harborne. Don't let us have one system for the town and another for the country. Don't let us have England parcelled out like a chessboard into educational squares of

black and white, so that a mere change of residence may discharge a parent from the performance of his duties, and may deprive his children of their highest privileges. I appeal to the sense of justice and to the patriotism of this great meeting that, whilst using all your exertions to secure the blessings of education for your own children, you should not forget those millions who are outside the influence and intelligence of these great centres of population, who cannot make their voices heard in assemblies like this, and whose children will lose all the benefits of this reform if you do not take up their cause and plead for them. In agricultural districts the School Boards will be formed of farmers or their nominees. I am not going to say that farmers are worse or better than any other class of men ; but I do say that, unfortunately and mistakenly, they believe their interests are opposed to the spread of education ; they think, and there they are right, that the spread of education will raise the rate of wages ; and they think, and there I do not agree with them, that in consequence of this their interests will suffer. One thing is certain, that if education became general, we shall no longer find Dorsetshire labourers contented—I will not say contented, but compelled—to work for 9s. a week, and a taste of meat when something happens to a sheep on the farm. And I venture to think when all children are at school we shall no longer find little boys of nine years of age leading the plough from four o'clock in the morning till six o'clock in the evening, like that poor little lad of whom we read the other day, that he was found dead from exposure to cold and from hunger at the close of this terrible task. But because they believe it is their interest to oppose the spread of education, you will have farmers in the agricultural districts over which they have control protesting against the spread of compulsory education. I venture to say that the history of all permissive legislation is a history of failure, counterfeit, and sham. Take one illustration. You know there is an Act in operation called Denison's Act, which provides that the Poor Law Guardians may pay the fees of outdoor paupers. How far has that

been put into force? In one of the reports of the Privy Council it is stated that in nine counties in England, out of 38,454 children who came under the operation of this Act, only eleven were being educated, at an expense of £2, 8s. 4d. a year. The very words 'permissive compulsion' seem to involve a contradiction. They are calculated to bring the principle into contempt. If we believe that compulsory education is necessary, let us take care to get it set in operation in an efficient manner, and not in a shape which will provoke the largest amount of opposition and do the least amount of good. The next objection we take to this Bill is one which comes home, I think, to every working man. We object to the retention of school fees, and we object to the permission which alone is given to School Boards to grant free schools. Under the system of this Bill every man will be taxed to pay for education—taxed through the rates or through the general taxation of the country; and in addition he will be called upon to find the school fees, which are the price he must pay for the so-called blessing of sectarian instruction. Mr. Dixon, in the letter which has just been read, points out very properly that there are thousands and hundreds of thousands who are living upon the very borderland of poverty, unfortunately, and who cannot bear this extra expense, and these men will have under this system to sue to a School Board for their tickets, to undergo an examination in their private affairs at the hands of the Board, and to expose all the history of their struggles and all the details of their hardships, and then, if they are successful, they will only obtain as a charity what we say is their right. They will have to accept as a boon and as alms what we say is the privilege of every citizen; and this way the education of the child will be purchased by the degradation of the parent,—and even the great blessing of education may be bought at too dear a price. This is not all. I say the scheme would be found to be impracticable. The Board must lay down some kind of rule. Suppose they decide that a man earning 30s. or more shall pay the school fees, then the man who is receiving, unfortunately

for himself, just 30s. a week, will have to find, not merely the fees for his own children, but the fees for the children of his luckier neighbour who is only earning 29s. 6d. a week. And this proposal has been recommended to you to secure your feeling of independence and your sense of parental responsibility. I do not think the independence of the working classes will ever be secured by an Act of Parliament which perpetuates a gross injustice and inequality; and I do not think you will be very charitably disposed to those who are so uncommonly anxious about your independence, while they themselves never scruple to accept free nominations at the endowed schools and free scholarships at the universities for their own children. Their arguments amount to this—that a rich man may properly accept a scholarship of £50 a year, of which he has never contributed a farthing; but that you will be degraded by accepting a free education worth 30s. a year, of which you have already contributed a large part through the indirect taxation which you pay. It seems to me that this is only another illustration of the readiness of some men to

> 'Compound for sins they are inclined to,
> By damning those they have no mind to.'

I have left myself very little time for the remaining objections; but as I am to be followed by Mr. Dale, who will speak with authority, I am content to leave the matter in his hands. Only before I sit down I want to make one observation. There is a provision in this Bill which will permit School Boards to make grants in aid of denominational schools, providing it aid all alike. Thus in Birmingham the School Boards will be able to make grants of money to aid the teaching of the doctrines of the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and of all other Dissenters. I recollect I was present some time ago at a meeting in this hall called to discuss the question of the Irish Church, and on that occasion a letter was read from the Rev. Mr. Breay, and he made this remark: 'As a Protestant I protest against this Bill. The preamble states that some of the

confiscated property is to be applied to the teaching of any religion. This is worthy of a man of infidel principles.' Upon that occasion the man of infidel principles was Mr. Gladstone. I must say that this word infidel is rather too often on the tip of the clerical tongue. However, I only quote the letter as an illustration of the feeling which prevailed at the time, and I want to ask those clergymen in this town who support this Bill how they justify their adhesion to a measure one of the leading principles of which they considered a short time ago as 'worthy of a man of infidel principles.' Mr. Forster, when he introduced his measure, said he had solved the religious difficulty. I fear he has only shirked it. If the Bill work, as he said it will, for the benefit of all denominations, it would be merely a form of that concurrent endowment which the country has unanimously reprobated; and if it work, as I believe it will, for the benefit of the Church of England in England, and for the benefit of the Church of Rome in Ireland, it will be tantamount to a reimposition of the Church rates in the most objectionable manner, and in a more flagrant form than ever. In either case it is our duty to protest and to agitate against these portions of the measure. If it be carried without alteration I venture to say it will be the signal of a conflict such as this country has rarely seen, the issue of which may be prolonged but cannot be doubtful, and the result of which will be something more important than the Act of last session—something not less important than the disestablishment and disendowment of the English Church, which will have used its vast influence and immense resources to perpetuate and extend religious bigotry and religious oppression. Now, if you are told, as you have been told already too often, that our scheme—the alternative scheme—is an atheistic and irreligious innovation, I hope you will reply that no proposal can be justly open to such a charge which has for its sole object the material and moral advancement of the great bulk of the people, which will maintain the great principles of religious freedom and religious equality which have made this nation what it is, and seeks to lay far and

wide those solid foundations upon which alone a worthy faith can be established.

> 'All must be false that thwart this one great end,
> And all of God who bless mankind or mend.'

## EDUCATION: A NONCONFORMIST PROTEST

MANCHESTER, JANUARY 22, 1872

[At a Conference of Nonconformist delegates, met in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, Mr. Chamberlain moved the first resolution: 'That in the judgment of this meeting the time has come for the Nonconformist adherents of the Liberal cause to insist on a thorough and consistent application of the principles of religious equality in the public policy of the leaders of their party.']

IF this great meeting, including, as it does, representatives of the Liberal strength from every corner of the kingdom, carry this resolution with heartiness and unanimity, one of two things must happen: either the Government will be warned in time, will retrace its steps and amend its ways, or the Liberal party will be broken up and reconstructed. Now, sir, we cannot look this possible alternative in the face without a grave sense of responsibility. It is not with a light heart that we engage in such a warfare. Nor can we contemplate, without keen regret and pain, the severance of ties which have existed for generations, and the disruption of an alliance to which this country chiefly owes all that it has obtained of civil and religious liberty. If we are animated, as our opponents sometimes charitably assert, only by unworthy motives of sectarian jealousy and ignoble spite, then history will not fail to record its condemnation of our action, and the deserved failure of our policy. But if we believe that the great principles which are the bases of our political and religious life, which are the sources of our strength, the guarantees of our national freedom and welfare, are imperilled by the action of our once trusted leaders, then, I say, not any fear of consequences, nor any

dread of obloquy and abuse, should prevent us from defending the interests which are intrusted to our charge; and the responsibility of the results will not rest on our heads, but upon those who are false to their professions and false to all the traditions of the party which they claim to lead and to represent, but which they are willing to sacrifice and betray. Now, sir, I see it everywhere asserted by Conservative members of Parliament, who, curiously enough, are the only hearty supporters of the Liberal Government in this matter, that our present action is unreasonable and factious. Now, the charge is more weighty because it comes from gentlemen who, after their exertions in oppositions to the ballot and to army reform, must be admitted to be very good judges of what constitutes a really factious opposition; but, at all events, they cannot say that the Nonconformists have been prone to this sort of thing. They must admit it is a novel phase in our history. For years we have served the Liberal party; we have been hewers of wood and drawers of water; we have been very patient under somewhat contemptuous toleration very difficult to bear; we have accepted, meanwhile, every act of justice as a favour, and every instalment of rights as a singular and almost unmerited grace. Meanwhile, too, our intercessions have always been more powerful for others than for ourselves. Represented as animated only by sectarian and selfish motives, our main achievements are the relief of Jews from their disabilities, and the enforcement of the claims of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects to even and equal rights and justice. We have always advocated every measure of social improvement, every concession of popular rights, every removal of class distinctions, and the cause of liberty and freedom throughout the world; and we have postponed our special claims to consideration whenever the assertion of them appeared likely to hinder or delay an act of justice to our fellow-citizens, or a measure which would contribute to their happiness. So long as progress was sure, however slow it might be; so long as the faces of our leaders were turned towards the goal, however hesitating might be their advance, however poor might be their zeal,—

yet we loyally sustained them, and we patiently waited their pleasure or their convenience for the full fruition of our hopes. But now, when we might fairly expect an accelerated speed, when we might justly demand a larger share of attention and relief, suddenly the Liberal party falters, and the Liberal leaders hesitate; and, under the guidance of a man who boasts of his Puritan ancestors, while he is indifferent to their principles and to their cause, we see ourselves drifting back into the darkness when we thought we were emerging into the light of perfect day. Concessions which are made to threats of Irish disaffection, which are wrung from the Government by the terrors of a priesthood, which takes its inspiration from a foreign source, are curtly refused to Nonconformist loyalty. While Conservative support is angled for, and clerical opposition is bribed into silence with a great price, we are told to take our support elsewhere by the leader of a Ministry that we contributed mainly to bring into power. I say, then, that these are the justifications of the Nonconformist rebellion. Slowly we might be content to move, provided that all progress was an advance; gradually we might have been willing to obtain our just rights, provided that we always neared their attainment; but to go backward we absolutely refused, and Dissenters, I believe, will be induced, by no consideration of party loyalty or party ties, to be false to the trusts which are imposed upon them, to the interests and principles which they are to defend. Now this meeting and the conference which will open to-morrow is the answer to Mr. Gladstone's challenge—a challenge very likely uttered in haste, and perhaps more likely repented of at leisure. But we are not such degenerate descendants of our ancestors; we are not yet so low in courage, or so poor in spirit, as to refuse the test of our sincerity which we have been so ungraciously challenged to produce. Our policy is determined for us, our line and our duties are marked out; we were told that we were to convert the opinion of the nation to our views; or rather, as I would put it, that we were to make manifest the existing opinions of the majority of the nation, before the

Liberal leaders will think it worth while to pronounce upon matters of the highest religious and political importance, or to announce any definite policy upon questions which are raised in the name of equality and justice by the most earnest and most consistent of their adherents. We might have supposed in our simplicity that it was the part, the province of leaders to lead their armies to victory. We are disappointed to find that we have to drag our commanding officers into action. We might have thought that great principles would be naturally and necessarily applied; we find that we have to teach Liberal members that practice is better than profession, and that, as the copy-books told us, 'application is better than precept.' I have heard of the reply of a child which gives me a rather happy illustration of the state to which we are reduced. She was presented with a toy horse, but, unfortunately, one wheel of the machine was broken, and when she was asked how the animal went, she said, 'Oh, it goes very well if you push it very hard, and so long as you push it.' This is the condition to which the Liberal party is now reduced under the leadership of men whom we had delighted to honour—it will only move if we push it very hard, and it will only keep in motion so long as we continue our pushing. Well, now we have to ask ourselves what is to be the nature of the pressure which we are going to apply. I suppose, sir, that it is not consistent with the pacific habits of Nonconformists to make a demonstration upon Mr. Forster's windows, or to pull down any park railings, although we have been told that both those exhibitions have been very marvellous stimulants to our modern statesmanship. But we are met here to advocate no intemperance of word or action; on the contrary, the policy of this, as of another great alliance, which has its centre in this town, is one of total abstinence. The Nonconformists must withdraw their support at elections from Liberals until they have learned the Liberal alphabet, and can spell out the first words of the Liberal creed. Our opponents have set us an example of union and organisation. The parson and the publican have joined

hands at Plymouth, and again in the West Riding. Everywhere the Roman Catholics and Churchmen embrace; the lion lies down with the lamb in order to secure from School Boards support to denominational education. The so-called National Church is fast becoming one vast political organisation for maintaining the supremacy of a sect. The so-called national schools, built in part with our money, mainly supported with the funds derived from the National purse, are everywhere used as committee rooms at elections, everywhere centres for the support of a power which has hitherto been prominent in its resistance to popular reform. We cannot win by these means, nor with such allies; but we may sink our individual differences, we may unite as one man to remove the last vestige of ecclesiastical supremacy. And in our struggle for this object, and to secure religious equality, I believe that we shall have the support of the great masses of the people, who are always in favour of a policy of liberty and justice. Now, the support of the past few months has been not a little encouraging in this direction. Already there is a very marked change in the utterances both in the press and on the platform since it became known that Nonconformists were determined to maintain and to assert their rights. No one talks gaily now of cantering over the religious difficulty, that celebrated euphemism by which the Vice-President of the Council expressed his intention of overriding the claims and the consciences of the Dissenters. You, sir, have referred to the utterances of the *Times* newspaper, utterances as contradictory as they are clever; but the latest utterances of that paper have been on our side. It no longer sees that our action is simply unreasonable and mutinous; on the contrary, it only pleads now for patience, for moderation. We are not to entreat or to desist, but simply not to force the pace, and reduce progress to deadlock and confusion. Now, sir, that plaintive appeal comes rather late in the day. It only proves that the writer of the article is acquainted with a very old and classic fable. The cock once roosted on a perch above the horses, and so long as he was safe there he crowed very lustily, and he taunted his

companions with the inferiority of their position. But when the perch broke, and he tumbled under their feet, as soon as he had lifted himself up he addressed them gravely, and he said: 'For goodness' sake, gentlemen, let us be very careful lest we tread on one another's toes.' Now there is one great advantage in the position which we have taken up—that is that we are all beginning to see clearly the principles which are behind our agitation; that we are beginning to get a clearer insight into the questions which are involved, and a better idea of our duties in respect to them. This payment, for instance, of fees to denominational schools, this grievance which has roused the country, is in itself a small matter, but the principle, of which it is a violation, is a great matter. We have been taunted by our opponents, and not altogether without reason, with inconsistency in straining at this gnat while we have been so long swallowing the camel of immense resources voted to sectarian purposes. But I venture to hope that this inconsistency is fast disappearing. At all events, the position is not altogether without precedents, which may throw some light upon our better policy. I was reading the other day in that eloquent *History of the Netherlands*, written by the late United States Minister, how Philip II., when he introduced the Spanish Inquisition into that country, was astonished at the outbreak which his proposal excited. He was aware that the institution in a somewhat different form had existed for fifty years; it had destroyed the lives of tens of thousands of persons, and, therefore, as his counsellors said, and as he agreed, it had worked very well; and he was astonished that the people should object to this slight and formal addition to their sufferings. But when the insurrection came at last, not only the Spanish Inquisition, but the whole vile fabric of bigotry and superstition and persecution perished with it. And so we say, if I may compare small things with great, this payment of fees is the last straw which has roused us to throw off the whole burden; but once roused to this position we shall not rest until every vestige of ecclesiastical supremacy has been swept away, and complete religious equality has

been secured for every section of the community. In claiming this, although Nonconformists, we are not claiming our own Nonconformist interests only. Special privileges in ecclesiastical matters have their counterpart in political monopolies and social class distinctions; they react injuriously on all progress and reform; they cramp the energies of those whom they are intended to bless, and they make them narrow, and deprive them of popular sympathies. The Bishop of Manchester, whose outspoken utterances we admire, even when we most differ from him, told us the other day that the clergy were like other men, actuated with similar motives and with the same feelings, and the same virtues. I willingly believe it, and when, therefore, I see them as a body always opposed to the popular side, always on the side of property and privilege, I say the fault cannot be in the men, it must be in the system. If they resisted those reforms to which you alluded in your quotation from Earl Russell, if they were opposed to the abolition of the Corn Laws, if they always took the side of the landowner, if they favoured the case of the Southern slave-owner, if they were opposed to reform and to the extension of the suffrage, while their brethren of other denominations were always forward in the cause of liberty and freedom at home and abroad, I say the difference must not be sought in the differences of religion, or in human nature; it must be sought, and will be found, in that peculiar institution which renders the clergy of our Established Church out of time and out of harmony with the aspirations of a free people. It is not their religious work that we wish to subvert, nor is it their spiritual life that we would destroy; but we attack their political power, which has always been used against the interests of the majority of the nation; and I, for my part, cannot believe that the people of this country will continue to surrender great resources for the support of a system which makes great men opponents of freedom, which makes good men enemies of the people's rights. In striving to remove distinctions which have acted so injuriously, we have the welfare of the nation for our first object; and, if I might

be permitted to quote from a poet who never wrote any questionable books I would remind you:

> 'That they who fight for freedom undertake
> The noblest work mankind can have at stake;
> Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call
> A blessing, freedom is the pledge of all.'

Ours, then, is no mere fight between the Dissenters on the one hand and a rival Church upon the other; ours is the cause of the nation against sectarianism, the cause of the people against the priests. These may enjoy yet a little longer whatever support a Liberal Government may give them; but the hands are moving swiftly round the dial, and the knell of priestly domination and sectarian rule has already rung. Our path is mapped out before us, the consummation of our hopes is within our grasp, if we will only lay our hands to the work, and neither shrink nor falter till it is well, and wisely, and thoroughly accomplished.

## CLASS LEGISLATION

### Sheffield, September 23, 1873

[An address to the Sheffield Reform Association, and practically the first definite appearance of Mr. Chamberlain as Nonconformist turned to politician. While ostensibly he attacks 'the Tories,' it is noticeable that the manufacturers came in for the worst of his indictment. To Tories his doctrine may have been less offensive than to Liberal free-traders like Mr. Bright, whose colleague he was to be in the parliamentary representation of Birmingham. Lord Shaftesbury was indeed nearer akin to Mr. Chamberlain than was Mr. Bright at that moment.]

When I received the invitation of the committee of the Sheffield Reform Association to address you to-night, it was my intention in accepting that invitation to confine myself exclusively to certain phases of class legislation, by which capital has from time to time sought to restrain the freedom of labour, and by which the working classes in this country allege, and I think justly, that they have been grievously injured. But a few days afterwards, I came across an

extract from the *Times* copied from one of your local journals, by which I found that my visit to Sheffield had already been made the subject of comment, and that I was very good-humouredly challenged by the editor of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* to take for my subject certain other instances of what he was pleased to term class legislation, by which he thinks the middle class have shown their magnanimity, their self-denial, and their generosity; while the working class have made for this exercise of virtue only an ungrateful return. I do not like to refuse any challenge, especially one which is urged in courteous language, as in the present case; and if the meeting will bear with me I should like to turn aside for a few minutes to consider the problem which has been placed before me for solution by your local editor. Let us see what he says. He says that for thirty years the middle class have had exclusive control of the legislation of this country. That is a tolerable admission to begin with. I do not hesitate to say that I am a sufficient Radical to believe that that in itself constitutes an exceedingly great grievance, of which the working class have to complain. The editor of the *Telegraph* admits that for thirty years the middle class have ruled the Legislature which has made the laws; but he says that such has been their self-denial, such has been their disinterestedness, that they occupied the whole of this period in relieving the working class of an excessive burden of taxation, putting it upon their own shoulders; and in the meantime the working classes, although not directly represented in Parliament, have nevertheless contrived some kind of legislation of their own, which has had such extraordinary results that it has enormously increased the price of building and doubled the cost of coal. In this way, he says—or leads us to infer—the working classes have made a very poor return for the self-sacrifice which has been exhibited by the class to which I have the honour to belong. On the whole, then, it appears from this statement of the *Telegraph* that the editor thinks that class legislation is a very good thing when the rich are legislating for the poor, but that it is a very bad thing when the poor begin to govern themselves.

When I first saw that statement I confess that I was astonished and gratified beyond measure. I belong to the middle class, and I am proud of the ability, the shrewdness, the industry, the providence, and the thrift by which they are distinguished, and which has in so considerable a degree contributed to the prosperity and the stability of the empire. I confess, however, that I did not know that to these virtues we added that of this generous self-sacrificing spirit, this entire ignoring of our own interests which the Sheffield editor attributes to us. On one occasion, Sydney Smith, preaching to his congregation, told them that Englishmen were 'distinguished by the love of their species,' and when he found that the collection was very trifling he said he had made a mistake; he meant to say that they were 'distinguished by the love of their specie.' I confess that I thought this description would have perhaps better described the class to which I belong. I am not ashamed to say that I think the British tradesman well understands how to take care of No. 1, that he knows that charity begins at home, and preaching that principle is careful to practise it. This view of the case was entirely contradicted by the article to which I have referred, and for some days I walked several inches higher. But, on further consideration, the flattering dream conjured up by the enthusiasm of the local editor vanished; and at the touch of criticism I discovered that we were but ordinary mortals after all. Because I began to discover that although it was perfectly true that the middle class has relieved the working class of a great load of taxation, yet they have not altogether forgotten themselves in the process. The sacrifice which they have made has been very profitable for their own interests. But above and beyond all I had to ask myself, if the middle class took these taxes off, who put them on? Ought they ever to have been imposed? Because no one pretends, even at the present time—after this remission has taken place—that the working class pay less than their fair share of the taxation of the country. Liberal statisticians, on the contrary, are united in maintaining that the incidence of taxation presses

unfairly upon the poorer classes of the community. Even Mr. Dudley Baxter, who is a great Conservative authority, has written that the pressure of taxation upon the working classes is too great in proportion to that upon the trading class, and the class which is above that. So you see that this liberality consists only in this—that in the course of thirty years the middle class have partially remedied the injustice which was the creation of the previous century of misrule. That does not say very much for class legislation; if the working classes had been represented, as they ought to have been, in Parliament, that possible injustice would never have existed; or if it had been created, then they would have known how to reform it in less than thirty years. The fact is, that this argument of your editor is only the old Tory cry which has been furbished up for this occasion. It is the argument which is always brought forward to oppose claims for the redress of grievances, to oppose demands for reform and improvements in legislation. It is the argument that because the instalment of a debt has been paid, therefore the creditors shall not demand the remainder. It was the argument used for a long time to keep Catholics and Jews from their rights, and the same argument is advanced now when the Nonconformists claim equality and justice. In our case these gentlemen say to us, 'What would you have? Your position is much better than it was. Our ancestors persecuted yours; they put them to death; they imprisoned, they tortured them; they fined them and subjected them to every conceivable disability and wrong. We no longer desire to continue this system—or what perhaps is the same thing, we no longer have the power. Is not yours a base ingratitude which is not satisfied with the concessions which we have made; but which takes advantage of these to demand perfect justice and complete equality?' It seems to me that the answer to this—as in the case of the working classes—is that there is no folly greater than that which struggles for the remnant of an injustice, the greater part of which has long been given up; no folly greater than that which maintains laws simply for the purpose of irritation

and annoyance long after they have ceased to have any real power. As to the other matter to which your editor directs my attention, it does not seem to me to be worth any lengthened debate. Certainly, it shows great hardihood in a man who lives in the middle of a coal district to tell you—who must be aware of the circumstances—that the enormous increase in the price of coal is due to the rise in the rate of wages. When I know, as I do know, that collieries, which were for a long time unprofitable, are now paying 50 and 100, and even 150 per cent. dividend to their shareholders, I think I can form a shrewd guess who are those who are benefited by these advantages. I think I know whose pockets are the fuller for the rise. When Mr. Artemus Ward was lecturing in the United States, he said he was obliged to charge two dollars for stall seats because oats had gone up fifty cents per bushel. It seems to me that the coal-owners are taking a leaf from the American lecturer; and they have actually persuaded an innocent Sheffield editor that the coalmasters have been obliged to double the price of coal because they have added a few shillings a week to the wages of their workpeople.

Before I leave this subject there is one illustration of class legislation I would not willingly forget. There is one class in this country who have never had any voice, either directly or indirectly, in the work of government. They have been wholly dependent upon the beneficent legislation of the class above him; and this class, mark you, has never suffered from the baneful results which your editor appears to consider must follow the establishment of unions. They have never known what it is to combine until very recently; and what has been the result? Why, this, that the agricultural labourers in this country are the worst paid, the worst fed, the worst clothed, and the worst housed peasantry in the civilised world. It is not I who say this alone. It is stated upon the evidence of Royal Commissioners; upon the testimony of clergymen, ministers of religion, and of travellers of undoubted impartiality and intelligence. And what have the upper classes done for these men? How have

they benefited by that remission of taxation to which your editor refers? How has their condition been improved by resting entirely upon the legislation of another class? I thank God that at last they have been driven by terrible wrong to combine in their own defence. They have done more in one twelvemonth by organisation for themselves than all other classes in the country have done for them in thirty years of previous legislation. I don't think it is very wise, then, to raise this question of the gratitude which is due from the labourers for the legislation of those above them. If that account is going to be settled I think there are some heavy arrears, and the balance won't be altogether on one side. The fact is, all class legislation is bad. You cannot trust one class, however well-intentioned, with the sole control of the interests of another. The Legislature may mean for the best, but if it looks at every question from the standpoint of a single class, its decision must be more or less one-sided. And herein lies, as I believe, the great distinction between Toryism and Liberalism. I wish I could say between Tories and Liberals; but unfortunately there are some Liberals who are Liberals only in name—who use their Liberalism to cover a multitude of sins—and therefore I always distinguish between the principles of Liberalism, which are immutable and impregnable, and the professors of Liberalism who frequently leave their Liberalism behind them when called upon to practise what they preach. The cardinal principle of Liberalism is this—that the people shall be assisted to govern themselves; and the principle which underlies Toryism is the principle of patronage—the principle that the poor can best be governed by those who style themselves their betters. Well, now, it seems to me that this Conservative fallacy has distinguished the recent legislation by which the interests of the working class have been affected. I would be willing to assume that in all this legislation there has been a desire to act fairly as between party and party; but one of the parties certainly has never been consulted; and the consequence is, as I believe, that there has been a failure of justice. I have considered the

claims which are put forward at the present time by the representatives of labour, and I am here to maintain that if I understand them aright, they are moderate in their character, are just in principle, and that they cannot any longer with safety be resisted or delayed. There are two objects, as it seems to me, which underlie all this legislation. One of these objects is concealed—the other half is frankly avowed and perfectly legitimate. The first object is to repress trade unions; to put a stop to combinations; to leave labour without organisation in the struggle which it must occasionally be called upon to maintain against capital. The other object, on the contrary, is to protect persons and property from violence, and to provide for individual freedom and liberty. I feel that the second of these objects —which is legitimate—can never be efficiently and perfectly secured until the other is entirely abandoned. Just so long as masters refuse to admit that their men have just as great a right to combine for their own object as the masters have to combine in order to arrange the terms upon which they shall sell their products, just so long as masters refuse to allow their workpeople a fair voice in the settlement of the terms upon which they give their labour; so long they may expect to hear of strikes, and so long will there be no hope of a happy solution of the difficulties which trouble the relations between labour and capital. One thing is quite certain, whatever employers may think upon this subject, trade unionism is inevitable. You may just as well expect in the present day to repress combinations as Mrs. Partington could hope to sweep out the Atlantic with a mop. Working men, in the nineteenth century, are not going to be jockeyed out of the advantages which the right of combination has secured to them, by any indirect legislation whatever; and it is perfectly futile and absurd to keep laws upon the statute book which have this as one of their objects, however skilfully concealed. I go farther. I do not object to this kind of legislation merely because it is futile. I think, even if it were possible to repress trade unionism, it would not be desirable. I am here to maintain that trade unions have

their good side, even if they have their bad side. I believe that they can be shown to have done very much to repress the frequency of strikes ; to make strikes when they do occur less violent as well as disastrous ; and to increase the independence and providence, and improve the general character of the working class. No doubt they have done more. They have raised the rate of wages, and that, of course, is their primary claim upon the support of the working class. But when I consider the enormous strides which have been made by commerce during the last fifty years ; when I know that the profits of trade never were so great as they are at the present time ; when I know that enormous fortunes never were so easily or so quickly accumulated, I say it is just and right that the poorer class should also share in this general prosperity. But then it is said that the effect of these unions has been to drive trade out of the country. That is said ; but it has never been proved. And when I look at the undoubted evidence of our Government statistics, showing how there is a continuing and enormous increase in the exports of this country, I say that such apprehension is altogether uncalled for. I say that, on the contrary, it is perfectly capable of proof that the rate of progress in this country is maintained. It is quite true that here and there one trade is temporarily, or it may be permanently, injured, but another trade takes its place ; and the general progress is continual and perpetual. A further objection, and which I think deserves more serious consideration, is that the general effect of the rules of some of these unions is to restrict trade unnecessarily, and to interfere with its freedom. That is worth some little consideration ; because to that notion is due the prejudice which so largely prevails amongst the governing classes against these combinations. Just let us take one or two illustrations of the kind of rules to which I am making reference. There is a rule amongst the masons that they won't fix a stone which has been dressed at the quarry or from the job. Of course, the result of that is that the cost is largely increased, and the price of building is increased ; and I must say frankly that it is very difficult to

see what class in the community can possibly benefit by such a rule. It seems, however, to be more a question between different classes of workpeople than between employers and their workpeople. Again, in many unions there are rules against 'chasing,' or overwork, which appear at first sight unnecessarily restrictive and injudicious. It is said that bricklayers are forbidden to touch bricks with both hands, and that labourers may not carry more than a stipulated number in their hods. I do not pronounce a positive opinion upon cases of this kind, which I am unable perfectly to comprehend; but I say that possibly the occurrence of them gives rise to a great deal of natural prejudice. There is one thing, however, which middle-class criticism invariably forgets, and that is whether these regulations are right or wrong; at all events they have a precedent for them, which has been set by the middle classes themselves. We have no right, at any rate, to complain of working men adopting rules which may be unwise, and which in their ignorance of political economy they are very likely to think politic, when we find the learned professions, who ought to know better, adopting precisely similar regulations. Take an illustration. One of the rules complained of is a rule which obtains in almost every trade society, and which regulates the minimum rate of wages; and it is said that this places all men upon a dead level, that it puts the able and intelligent workman on precisely the same footing as the idle and inefficient man. But the architects do exactly the same thing. Any architect who should presume to take less than five per cent. commission for his job would be scouted at once by the whole of the profession. A man may be able to build a cathedral, and he gets five per cent. for his skill and his talent. A man may be unable to plan anything more distinguished than a barn, and yet he dare not ask any less than five per cent. for his skill in the matter. And any physician who should presume to do the work of an apothecary by dispensing his own medicines would never again be met in consultation with any member of that learned body. What is that but the rule which forbids

masons to do bricklayers' work, and bricklayers to do masons' work? We come to other professions—the profession of the law, for example. If I employ a counsel to defend me, and I want to see him to explain the circumstances to him, I am not allowed to do so without the intervention of an attorney, whether I want the man or not. However much he may be in my way, he must be employed and must be paid, or else I cannot see counsel. What is that but the rule that requires that the bricklayer or the mason shall invariably be attended by his labourer whether he requires his services or no? I may take as the last illustration that if I select a counsel and take him out of the court in which he usually pleads, I have to pay for his services a special fee—a fee so heavy as to be almost prohibitory—before I am allowed to select the man of my choice. Again, I say what is this but the principle expressed in a different form which regulates the proceedings of the Manchester bricklayers when they refuse to lay bricks which are made in another district? And therefore, in judging these rules, let us start with the maxim, 'What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.' Don't let us condemn the societies unless we are prepared to condemn the proceedings of those learned professions, and don't let us make the mistake of denying the right of the societies to make these or any other conditions they please. The question is not as to their right, which is undoubted, to make any terms they please for the settlement of their services, but as to the policy of these measures. We shall do no good by sweeping abuse of the societies and of combinations in general; we shall only settle these difficulties by friendly conferences and discussions. Therefore, my argument to employers is this: In the first place I say to them, 'Trade unions are not the "bogey" which your fearful fancy paints them. They have, as I have said, their good side of the question as well as their bad; but whatever they are, you have got to make the best of them. Remember it is paltry to try and stab in the dark institutions which you dare not openly oppose; accept the position; examine into the grievances which

may be urged by your workmen ; remove all just foundation of complaint by them ; and then, when you have done that, you will have established your claim to be heard in your turn, if you complain that any of these regulations are vexatious and unjust.' Unfortunately, however, there are many employers who refuse to consider the complaints which are founded upon justice, because they pretend that the men in some other matters are unjust and unreasonable. But it seems to me that this is as inconsistent as the conduct of the Welsh jury who convicted a man of horse stealing after he was proved to be innocent, because they said they strongly suspected him of being a poacher. For my part, I confess that the growing discontent and irritation of a large portion of the population, embracing, as the wage-earning class do, twenty-two millions of souls in this country, is no trifling matter, and when I know that their irritation is founded upon laws which can clearly be shown to be unjust and unfair, then I say I am lost in amazement at the stupidity of those who resist every attempt at amendment.

If I am not occupying your time too long, I should like, having said that I believe the claims of the men are just, to add what it is I believe they demand. At the present, I understand their demands are confined to three points. They claim, in the first place, that the laws of conspiracy shall be recast—and the curious thing is that there is nobody to defend this law, although nobody does anything to amend it. When it was under discussion the other day in the House of Commons hardly anybody had a word to say for it. It was admitted that under its provisions there had been on several occasions miscarriage of justice. In the case of the gas stokers, the law officers of the Crown admitted that the men had been unjustly convicted, and they showed their impression of what was due to legal innocence by recommending the Crown to reduce the sentence so far as to alter it to four months' imprisonment instead of twelve. Had the men been guilty they would have had twelve months, but as they were innocent the Crown was merciful enough only to

inflict four. But the fact is that this Act invites misapprehension and wrong of all kinds. Wherever two or more persons combine to commit an offence, the combination is in itself a crime punishable with two years' imprisonment. The offence may be as trifling and as trumpery as you please. It may be such an offence that no juryman would convict for it; but acting in concert to do it constitutes a most serious crime. I saw the other day that an innocent couple in London were brought up at one of the police courts, charged with skipping in the parks in contravention of the ingenious rules of Mr. Ayrton. I am not a lawyer, but it seems to me that if these two persons had been indicted for a conspiracy they would have been amenable to severe punishment; they might actually have subjected themselves to a penalty of two years' imprisonment with hard labour for this exceedingly childish and innocent offence. Of course, it is quite evident that there may be cases in which combination is an aggravation of the original offence. But it is urged that these cases should be made the subject of special legislation, and that the law should not confound offences of a very different character; and, contrary to the spirit of our English jurisprudence, punish the innocent in order that the guilty might not escape. It is said, I believe, that there are very few cases of injustice which occur under this Act. I am told that Mr. Bruce—when he was Mr. Bruce—the present Lord Aberdare—said that he could not conceive how such an agitation could have arisen from so slight a cause. I contend, however, that the working men are perfectly justified in claiming that this sword shall no longer be suspended over their heads; and if it be maintained that it only very seldom falls, then I say that is the more reason for giving up an instrument which is so seldom called into requisition. The next subject of complaint is a curious illustration of class legislation. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill was passed in order to satisfy the demands of the working classes; yet so little did the Legislature, as at present constituted, enter into the spirit of the complaints which are made that actually the Amendment Act has given

rise to more complaints and irritation than the original Acts. In the first place, this is an Act which is directed entirely against the working classes. It contains a long and comprehensive clause which defines almost every conceivable offence which working men can possibly commit in combination, but it has not one word to say for the equally serious offences which the evidence of the Truck Commission and other testimony shows is not infrequent in the case of employers. I should say the obvious object of this law was to legalise trade combinations, and yet so curiously has it been worded that it has actually been used on more than one occasion to prevent the attainment of the results for which alone combination is sought. The combination of working people is always intended to secure a rise in wages, and it is sought to achieve that object by bringing influence to bear upon men to prevent them from receiving and taking less than the stipulated rates. But in the case of this Act coercion is so vaguely defined that it includes, and has been held to include, persuasion, which is perfectly legitimate. Of course, it is very difficult to draw the line between persuasion and coercion. I don't know whether you recollect Mr. Sam Weller's definition of persuasion. When his father complained that the red-nosed man (the Rev. Mr. Stiggins) continually intruded into his premises, Sam Weller recommended him ' to pison his rum and water ' ; but when his father objected that that was rather an extreme course to take, his son said, ' Well, you might drop him into the water-butt and put the lid upon him, and then if you find that he is insensible to kindness, you can try the other persuasion.' That is, perhaps, a rather strong definition of the term ' to persuade,' but I venture to say that it is not more monstrous than the definition which has obtained in many of our courts of the term to coerce. Two offences are stated in the clause to which I have been referring. One of them is violence to the person or property, an offence which I suppose we all admit deserves sufficient punishment ; but the other offence, which subjects the person who commits it to precisely the same penalty, that of three months' imprisonment with

hard labour, is watching a house where a person resides, with a view to coerce him. I want to know how anybody can tell when I watch a house what my views are in so doing. The old maxim was that 'a cat might look at a king,' but now it appears that a working man cannot look at a house without subjecting himself to three months' imprisonment. You know that is not a fanciful idea at all, because on more than one occasion men have actually been sent to gaol for the offence which is called 'picketing,' that is to say, for watching a manufactory or place of business, where no attempt at intimidation or coercion has been proved, or even alleged, and on another occasion a man was committed to hard labour for two months because he had delivered a handbill containing the particulars of a strike. I believe—I can be corrected if I am wrong—that there is no desire on the part of the working class to lessen the legitimate securities against violence and undue intimidation; but they do claim—and I say they claim rightly—that these offences shall be fairly and fully defined, and that there should not be substituted for this plain definition a vague enumeration of acts and intentions which must lead to misapprehension, and which renders it impossible for an honest man to say when he is legally right and when he is technically wrong. The last cause of complaint of which I shall speak to-night is the Masters and Servants Act of 1867. That is a very extraordinary Act. It provides that in any breach of contract between an employer and a workman, upon its hearing before a court consisting of two justices or a magistrate, the court may decide either to order the fulfilment of the contract or to give damages for the breach, or to impose a fine not exceeding £20, with a penalty of imprisonment in default, or in an aggravated case to send the offender to gaol for three months, with or without hard labour. I venture to say that is a most extraordinary and anomalous power to give such a tribunal. Most of these cases are tried before the unpaid magistracy. I do full credit to their integrity and their general ability; but at the same time it is hardly possible that they should separate themselves from the sympathies

and prejudices in favour of the class to which they belong, especially when, as is the fact, they are very frequently indirectly interested in the matters which come before them for decision. And while these men have the power to say, when a man is brought before them, whether he shall stand in the dock on his trial for a criminal offence, or whether he shall only be a party in a civil action—while, I say, they have this power it is hardly likely working men should be satisfied. Suppose for a moment that the case were reversed. This Act does nothing at all for cases of breach of contract between masters and domestic servants. Suppose we have legislation for that purpose; and suppose we provide that all cases of the kind shall be tried before a bench of footmen, with power to these gentlemen in all cases where they think that unnecessary harshness has been used to send the offender to gaol for three months. How long do you think class legislation of that kind would last against the storm which would be raised after one or two noblemen and gentlemen had been sent to gaol? Bear in mind, too, that this matter is not a small affair. The very Acts of which I have been speaking affect the interests of thousands—nay, they concern thousands and tens of thousands. In a single year there were 17,000 cases under the Masters and Servants Act; 742 persons were summarily sent to gaol, and I suppose that hundreds of others must have gone to prison through inability to pay the fine. But it is said that the Act is precisely the same both for masters and servants. I can only say the application of the Act is very different, because I have never yet heard of a case in which an employer has been sent to gaol, although my faith in humanity is not strong enough to make me believe that there are no cases in which employers have been guilty of aggravated breach of contract. Then it is said that the difference lies only in the ability of employers to pay the fines which are inflicted. It is said that the law cannot recognise pecuniary distinction between classes. I say the law need not exaggerate the existing evils of poverty. There is no reason why in this, as in other cases, the poor should not be suffered to

pay the fines by instalments. I say there is no reason why this unjust Act should not be entirely repealed ; and in that case the county courts would be a sufficient and efficient tribunal for all classes of breach of civil contract. Of course, there might remain a different class of cases in which it is said the civil remedy would be insufficient. Take an illustration. Suppose that in the course of a complicated process of manufacture the men employed at a particular stage struck work without notice ; it might be that the whole of the work was destroyed, that hundreds of pounds damage was inflicted, and that the rest of a large factory was thrown out of employment by their ill-considered action. That is a kind of illustration which is continually quoted by the middle-class press. It is purely imaginary, I believe, for I have never met with a case in practice. Still, that is the kind of case which is held up to justify an unjust law, and hundreds of men are to be sent wrongfully to gaol in order that an imaginary employer may be spared suppositious damage, and that hypothetical workmen may be delivered from illusory wrong. I say, that these scruples may be met all the more readily, because I believe they have no tangible ground ; and I cannot see why there should not be legislation which would provide that in all cases in which malicious injury was proved to be done to property in consequence of an unjustifiable breach of a voluntary engagement, an adequate penalty should be awarded. Only, if this is to be done, let the legislation be complete and impartial. Don't let us exert the full force of the law to pluck out the mote from the eye of the workman, while we leave untouched the beam in the eye of the employer. There unfortunately have been breaches of contract by the rich, which have inflicted in our time infinitely greater damage and wrong than can possibly be effected by any *laches* on the part of the poor ; and I say that justice, to be respected, must be even-handed, and if she is blind, she must not be blind in one eye only.

I have completed the task which I undertook when I came here to address you. A speech upon such a subject as that

which has been chosen must necessarily be a somewhat dull enumeration of very commonplace wrongs; but the reiteration possesses a certain sober interest for those who suffer from these wrongs, without the adventitious aid of eloquence or fancy. In conclusion, let me say that I yield to no man in my desire that the law and its administration should be respected in this country. I contend that that is the only basis of settled government and of good order; I believe that that is the distinguishing mark of a civilised and an enlightened community. But the law must be impartial to gain respect. I dread more than I dread the possibility of violence from trade unions, I fear infinitely more than I fear the evil results of restrictive combinations, the growing conviction on the part of the great mass of the people that 'laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the laws,' and that the sacred name of justice is invoked to perpetuate class distinctions and to protect class interests. I know perfectly well that in stating frankly my convictions on this subject, I lay myself open to the usual reward of those who strive to separate themselves from the unfounded prejudices of the society in which they move. We are relegated at once to the rank of agitators; we are charged with setting class against class, and of breaking the bonds of harmony and of union. But I say it is no use preaching a peace which is no peace. There is no patriotism or wisdom in ignoring a patent danger and a self-evident wrong. There is no folly more stupendous than that which refuses to consider just claims temperately urged by great masses of the people. There is no crime so base as that of those self-styled instructors of public opinion who pander to selfish prejudices and intolerant assumption, while they ignore the irrefutable evidence of injustice and wrong. Such men may stay for the moment the settlement of these questions, but they cannot stave it off. The time will come when the solution will be obtained with or without them; and according to their conduct now will they then be consulted or entirely set aside. If they continue the course they now pursue, the time is coming when the working class, strong in its per-

fected organisation, as it is already in its overwhelming numbers, will say to them—

> 'We looked for guidance to the blind,
> We sued for counsel to the dumb,
> Fling the vain fancy to the wind—
> Your hour is past and ours is come.
> You gave in that propitious hour
> No kindly look, no gracious tone;
> But Heaven has not denied us power
> To do your duty and our own.'

## AN EARLY REFERENCE TO HOME RULE

SHEFFIELD, JANUARY 1, 1874

[A voice in the crowd: 'What about Home Rule for Ireland?' Mr. Chamberlain:—]

HOME Rule for Ireland is worthy of a separate and lengthened discussion. I can only say now, generally, that if Mr. Butt may be considered as a true exponent of the views of the Home Rulers, I am in favour of the system he advocates, and I believe also that the extension of the system of local government would be of the greatest advantage both to England and Ireland. It is only candid and fair to add that I am not in favour of any system which would go further than this, and which would separate the Imperial relation between the two countries.

## LOCAL MUSEUMS

BIRMINGHAM, JANUARY 22, 1874

[From a speech made in proposing a vote of thanks to Henry Cole, C.B., a founder of South Kensington Museum, for an address on Art and Education.]

I AM afraid I must agree with Mr. Cole that this nation is still very far behind its competitors and rivals in respect to this matter, although I believe that in the last twenty years

great progress and improvement have been made, thanks largely to the South Kensington Museum and to the agencies it has created and fostered. On the importance of local museums I am sure that Mr. Cole has been speaking to an audience already convinced. I do not grudge London its central institution. I believe it must necessarily be situated in the Metropolis. But London is not the head centre of any single branch of industry. It is not the chief place of any one single trade, and it is too much to suppose that our artisans, or those of Manchester or Sheffield, should go up to London, and there spend several weeks in studying specimens which they ought to be able to study in their own towns. . . . I want the best possible collection not only for present artisans, but for future generations of artisans, in their staple trade. My belief is that it would very well pay Government in this country to provide, in addition to what it may do for London, the centres of industry throughout the country with museums containing specimens connected with local art and trade. Bradford, Leeds, and Manchester, might have collections of textile fabric; Birmingham and Sheffield might have the finest collections of metal work in the kingdom; and Nottingham might have a collection of lace. At all events, I want to see this principle carried out in all centres of industry throughout the country.

## A SEAT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Birmingham, June 17, 1874

[From a speech made by Mr. Chamberlain, as Mayor, at the laying of the foundation-stone of the Municipal Buildings.]

In discharging the duty which has been placed upon me by the Council of Birmingham, I have now made a formal commencement of the greatest architectural work we have undertaken since our incorporation as a borough. My first observation is, that great as is that work, I wish it were greater, and I am sorry that we are not able at the present

time to contemplate the completion of our original plan by the erection of Assize Courts and Law Courts on the remainder of the site occupied by this building. I hope, however, that that work is only postponed, and that the time is not far distant when Birmingham will have an Assize of its own and we shall no longer be subject to the anomaly (I might almost say indignity) of having to carry a great part of our judicial business to Warwick, to the immense inconvenience and annoyance of those who are unfortunately parties to local litigation. But, ladies and gentlemen, the work at all events as it stands is of sufficient importance to merit some little notice and some slight ceremony. We now for the first time challenge comparison with the works of those who preceded us in the government of the town—the Commissioners who have left us as their legacy the Town Hall and the Market Hall, which, whatever their defects, are, at all events, worthy monuments of the enterprise and intelligence of those whom we have succeeded. I venture to hope that in this comparison we shall have no cause to be ashamed, and that we shall be able to show that the art and science of architecture has made advances proportionate to the progress in the intelligence and cultivation of the people. Well now, if I may be permitted, I would very briefly call your attention to the principal objects of this building. In the first place, then, on this spot, we intend to centralise all the offices of the Corporation. We are conducting an immense and ever-growing business in offices which at the present time are inconvenient and ill adapted for their purposes, and which are scattered throughout the town. Here, in future, we hope to centralise them and obtain a more efficient control, and by that means we believe the government of the town will be materially facilitated. In the second place, we propose to make provision for the inhabitants of Birmingham for the holding of those public meetings for which the Town Hall itself is unsuited, and which have hitherto been held in that subterranean chamber which we call the Committee Room of the Town Hall. Ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid to estimate the number of

worthy projects that have found a tomb in that funereal chamber. Hardly any scheme has been hardy enough to resist its depressing influence, and I think it will be matter for congratulation that future projects for the advancement and welfare of this community should see the light under more favourable auspices, and will run no risk of being stifled at their birth, as they would be in the Cimmerian darkness over the way. Then we also intend to provide fitting accommodation for the deliberations of what is our greatest social representative assembly, and I venture to think that ratepayers will not grudge us the fitting accommodation we require. The Town Council of Birmingham has been very patient under much tribulation. For many years we have conducted our business in an inconvenient room—in a mean and almost squalid chamber with very limited accommodation, and with unlimited annoyance of every kind. Now, we think the time has come when we, as the Sanitary Authority of this borough, should no longer violate in our persons every known canon of health. But, ladies and gentlemen, I put the case for the erection of these buildings upon much higher and broader grounds than the convenience or the comfort or even the health of your representatives. For my part, I have an abiding faith in municipal institutions, an abiding sense of the value and importance of local self-government, and I desire therefore to surround them by everything which can mark their importance, which can show the place they occupy in public estimation and respect, and which can point to their great value to the community. Our corporations represent the authority of the people. Through them you obtain the full and direct expression of the popular will, and consequently, any disrespect to us, anything which would depreciate us in the public estimation, necessarily degrades the principles which we represent. Therefore, just as in past times we have provided for our monarchs and our princes palaces in which to live, just as now we provide magnificent edifices for our great State departments and have found a worthy home for the Imperial Legislature itself, so now I think it behoves us to find a

fitting habitation for our local Parliament, to show the value we put upon our privileges and our free institutions. Let me remind you that those old communities from whom we derive the model of our municipal institutions were never behindhand in the discharge of this duty. We find in the old cities of the Continent—of Belgium, and Germany, and Italy—the free and independent burghers of the Middle Ages have left behind them magnificent palaces and civic buildings—testimonies to their power and public spirit and munificence, memorials of the time when those communities maintained the liberties and protected the lives of the people against the oppression, and the tyranny, and the rapacity of their rulers. We have fallen upon less stirring times, but if our duties are humble they are not less important, for it is not too much to say that upon the proper conduct of our local legislation depend the lives, the health, and the happiness of communities at all events vaster than ever were gathered together in those mediæval cities. Therefore I claim that in the erection of buildings which I hope will be worthy of the population and importance of Birmingham, we are not seeking to gratify any personal vanity or petty sense of self-importance, but are endeavouring to do honour to great principles, and to show our respect for institutions upon which the welfare and happiness of the community very largely depend.

## THE TASK OF BIRMINGHAM CORPORATION

BIRMINGHAM, OCTOBER 12, 1874

[From a speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of Hurst Street Chapel, Birmingham.]

THE Corporation of Birmingham is engaged in a great struggle to promote the welfare, health, and happiness of the population over which it rules, and its labours are supplemented by the individual efforts of such institutions as this

in connection with which we have been brought together. And on that ground I gladly lend whatever weight or dignity my office may possess to its support. . . . In the course of the last thirty years Birmingham has made marvellous progress. The population has more than doubled, its wealth has greatly increased, its public buildings have multiplied, its institutions have been enlarged and extended in all directions. Yet there still remains untouched a great black plague-spot of ignorance and vice. We have multiplied our churches and chapels to a great extent, but unfortunately the public houses seem to grow even quicker than the churches and chapels. We have increased our school accommodation, and at the same time we seem to find it necessary to enlarge the workhouse and gaol. What are we to do? Are we to fold our hands and say, 'The poor we have always with us; it was so ordained in the first, and it will be so to the end'? No man with any sense of his responsibilities and duties but will scorn to act on such a principle. Well, then, we may go on multiplying private charities and increasing subscriptions, and we shall do well; but I do not believe that by any amount of private or individual effort we shall really and thoroughly grasp the evils and difficulties which confront us. People call me a very advanced Liberal politician—I am an extreme Radical and I don't know what that is terrible besides. Well, if I am an advanced politician and all the rest, it is because I don't believe that any means but political means deal effectually with these evils. They have their origin in bad legislation, and nothing, I believe, but good legislation will reform and remove them. Therefore I am not ashamed to be called an advanced Liberal. I am a Radical Reformer because I would reform and remove ignorance, poverty, intemperance, and crime from their very roots. What is the cause of all this ignorance and vice? Many people say that intemperance is at the bottom of everything, and I am not inclined to disagree with them. I believe we hardly ever find misery or poverty without finding that intemperance is one of the factors in such conditions. But at the same time I believe

intemperance itself is only an effect produced by causes that lie deeper still. I should say these causes, in the first place, are the gross ignorance of the masses; and, in the second place, the horrible, shameful homes in which many of the poor are forced to live. . . . Take the Education question. . . . I do not believe that we shall ever completely solve the problem until we take the example set by those who have a larger experience in the matter. I mean the example set us by our brethren across the Atlantic, in the United States, by the people of Switzerland, in Sweden, and by our fellow-subjects in the colonies. I do not think we shall secure success until we follow their example and establish a general system of free schools. This is a matter which has only recently been before the Birmingham School Board, and I regret that upon this question there is a difference of opinion among the majority. It is said that the parents of many of the children can afford to pay a threepenny fee and ought to be made to do it. It is not denied in many cases that the parents can afford to make the payment, but it is asked, will they do it? In many cases the parents are not benefited by having their children taken from them and sent to school. The children are benefited, the whole community is benefited by their being educated and rendered able to take their part in life, but the parents may suffer for the loss of their children's labour. What we must do is by all possible means to tempt parents to feel for themselves the advantage which is derived from sending children to school. Take an illustration. Something like two million persons pass through the museum and visit the different parts of the Free Library every year. If it were said many of the two million could afford to pay one penny every time they visited the Library and the parks, no one would be able to dispute it. But would they pay the penny? And if the Corporation established such a fee, I undertake to say that, instead of two millions, not twenty thousand persons would visit the libraries and parks. And who would gain by such a course? Would the town gain because it got a few paltry pence from these persons, or would the town lose in the health and

happiness of its inhabitants, which would naturally be affected by their being debarred from visiting these places through a tax imposed on them. This is precisely the position of the schools at the present time. And if it becomes necessary, I believe no better advertisement could be made than to pay parents to send their children to school instead of demanding a tax from them or charging them for doing it. You smile at the remark—it is what the Swiss are doing at this moment. I am told that the rates would go up. Suppose the rates do go up—for, of course, education must be paid for in one way or another. One friend of mine thinks it hard that I, your Mayor, should be called upon to pay for the education of the poor people who live in the Inkleys. I do not think it hard at all. I think it right and just that I should pay for what I demand in the interests of the whole community. I believe that I have a direct interest and gain a clear advantage from the education of every one of my fellow-citizens. I desire to secure that education for them and I am willing to pay for it; and I believe that I cannot make a better investment than in the money I expend through the rates in order to secure the education of the whole of my fellow-townsmen. . . .

As to the condition of many of the houses of the poorer classes in the town, we talk about missions to the poor; but I think the men who preach Christianity to the poor must feel themselves powerless in the presence of the conditions in which the poor have to live. How can we tell a man to be good and decent and moral when we find him living in a place that is not fit for a beast to live in, much less a human being? The fact is that in our missions we begin at the wrong end; we attempt to apply remedies to diseases which ought never to exist in the social state at all. What we ought to do is to prevent the disease, and then we shall not want the remedy. We must endeavour to get all the houses made fit for people to live in, and then we must induce the occupants to keep the places clean. I count it a first duty that people shall communicate with the sanitary officers when they find nuisances existing on premises; and, re-

member, the Corporation will always be ready to exercise the powers they possess in removing any cause that interferes with the health of the inhabitants.

## THE ROYAL FAMILY : THE CORPORATION OF BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM, OCTOBER 17, 1874

[In 1874 Mr. Chamberlain's re-election as Mayor of Birmingham was viewed with some misgivings, because of the approaching visit of the Prince of Wales to open the Municipal Buildings, and the remarkable belief, then widely entertained, 'that the Mayor was a Republican who would be unwilling, or conscientiously unable, to give a becoming welcome to the Heir to the Throne.' The visit—and Mr. Chamberlain's part in it—passed off with memorable auspiciousness. But, a little while before, the Mayor took the opportunity of a civic occasion to refer to these anticipations and, with entire candour, to his own position. The following speech contains his *ipsissima verba*. The melancholy belief in a Republic in England, 'sure to come in time,' has long since passed into the limbo of outworn superstitions. It was gloomily current, among not only Radicals but Conservatives, forty years ago. It will be seen that the actual text of Mr. Chamberlain's remarks was not of a kind to horrify his contemporaries, though wild versions went abroad to horrifying purpose. After proposing the toast of the Queen and the Royal Family, the Mayor proposed that of the Corporation.]

THIS is a toast which always commends itself to every meeting of English gentlemen. Although democratic ideas are certainly making great progress in this country, I do not think any of us doubt for a moment that our Royal Family is personally as popular as any Royal Family in the world. We rightly exhibit our respect and esteem for her Majesty as well on account of her private and domestic worth as of the admirable manner in which she has always discharged the responsible duties of her high position. With respect to the Royal Family, we must admit the readiness they have always shown to respond to every public claim on them, the frankness, affability, and courtesy for which they are distinguished, and above all, the loyalty which they have ever shown to the constitution under which we live.

Under ordinary circumstances I might be content to leave the toast in your hands, but it has to-night a somewhat unusual significance in view of the approaching visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, and I shall ask you to allow me to occupy your time for a minute or two while I ask you to consider what really underlies this formal expression of loyalty we so often hear. I am the more anxious to do so, because I have been often the subject of misrepresentation and misapprehension—misrepresentation which, so long as I alone am concerned, is not of the slightest consequence, but which I wish to correct now that I am called upon to represent you and receive the royal visitors. I remember when you first elected me to the position I now fill, there was a good deal of doubt as to what might be my conduct in such an emergency as that which has arisen. One gentleman went so far as to say that the sunshine of royal presence would be refused to Birmingham so long as it had a Republican Mayor, for that no member of the Royal Family would think of visiting the town whilst I occupied the post of chief magistrate. The value of the anticipation you have now the means of estimating for yourselves. There were others who thought that if any of the Royal Family did come, it would be impossible for me to avoid taking the opportunity of insulting them in some way or another. These people seemed to forget that a man might be a gentleman as well as a Republican, and that even an advanced Liberal might not be unmindful of the duty of hospitality and of the courtesy every one owes to the guest. I want to go a step further. I want to protest against that ignorant and absurd prejudice which confuses very different ideas without any attempt at classification. I have no objection to be called a Republican, but before I do so, I want it to be distinctly understood what a Republican is. If to be a Republican is to have a deep unswerving faith in representative institutions ; if to be a Republican is to hold, as a matter of theory at all events, that that is the best government for a free and intelligent people in which merit is preferred to birth, then I hold it an honour to be associated

with nearly all the greatest thinkers of the country, and to be called a Republican. But if a Republican is one who would violently uproot existing order, who would thrust aside the opinion and affront the sentiment of a huge majority of the nation, merely to carry to a logical conclusion an abstract theory, then I am as far from being a Republican as any man can be. I have never, in private or in public, advocated Republicanism for this country. We may be tending in that direction, but I hold that the time has not arrived yet—even if it ever arrive—and I hold also that Radicals and Liberals have quite enough to occupy their best energies without wasting their time in what seems to me a very remote speculation. At the same time, gentlemen, there may be an exaggerated loyalty as well as an exaggerated Republicanism, and I do not think that those are the truest friends of Monarchy who enshrine, or attempt to enshrine, royal persons in a stifling atmosphere of fulsome admiration. In this, as in everything else, we must say what we mean, and mean what we say, and I think that a better description of loyalty than the sort which grows hysterical at public dinners on occasions of the usual loyal toasts, and gloats in private over the tittle-tattle of the clubs and the unproved and commonly unfounded scandals of what is called high life. We should praise our princes and rulers for what we see worthy of admiration, we may respect them as the type and symbol of constituted authority and settled order and Government in our midst, and by testimony like this we shall do them greater honour and give them greater pleasure than by attributing to them immaculate perfection and superhuman virtues. . . .

. . . I do not intend in the term 'Corporation' to include the 60,000 burgesses whom, according to my friend Alderman Hawkes, who has an uncomfortable practice of knowing too much municipal law, the term strictly includes. I intend to ask them to drink to the prosperity of the great institution of which they are at present the representatives. I have ventured to ask them to meet me after the transaction of their ordinary business

in the expectation and hope that I shall be able to show the great characteristics of their Corporation life. The first is that while they differ considerably upon many political and municipal questions, that does not prevent them entertaining a very friendly feeling towards each other, and does not hinder that good fellowship which ought to exist between men who are engaged in seeking a common object. The next point I wish to emphasise is that, however great their divergencies, they were unanimous in upholding the honour and dignity of the body to which they belonged and of the work they are endeavouring to do. Long before I had any idea of being a member of the Corporation, much less filling my present position, I always protested against any depreciation of municipal work and those who performed it. I do not think there is any sneer more undeserved than that directed against men who were willing unselfishly to devote their best energies and services to the town in which they lived, and I have always thought those who professed to think themselves above such work were infinitely beneath it. There is no nobler sphere for those who have not the opportunity of engaging in imperial politics than to take part in municipal work, to the wise conduct of which they owe the welfare, the health, the comfort, and the lives of 400,000 people. The Corporation, however, does not object to anything in the way of fair criticism. We are thankful to the press particularly, who interpret public opinion so faithfully, and call us over the coals from time to time. We accept the chastisement as dictated by parental affection and by a hearty appreciation of our work. And when I think how some people are treated by the public press, I do not conceive that the Corporation of Birmingham has much to complain of. I remember a man—an Irishman, I suppose—who, being asked what he thought of his wife after seven years' experience, declared she was a jewel, for she only struck him with the soft end of the mop. The press of Birmingham never touched them with the 'stale,' it always inflicts its chastisement with the soft end of the mop. I venture to hope that this close sympathy between the press

and their local institutions may long continue. They are two characteristic features of English life which distinguish them from every other country on the face of the earth. By the maintenance of this they will best promote public spirit and the sound political education of the people. Let us look abroad. In France we find the press gagged, local institutions unduly subject to a central power, and, as a result, a total want of knowledge of the proper conditions of fair public discussion ; on one hand apathetic indifference, on the other bigotry, intolerance, and prejudice. In the United States we see, from some cause I have never been able to understand, the press and local institutions more or less corrupt, and we find an absence of high political feeling and a want of the dignity which should pervade all public work. I venture to think that in England there is no sign of a decadence of their local institutions, for larger powers are given to municipalities every year, greater confidence is expressed in them, and up to the present time there has been no ground for supposing that these powers have ever been used for personal objects—no breath of suspicion attaches to the corporations of this country. On the whole, I am inclined to think that their work is well and thoroughly done. I am glad to think that the history of our Corporation is inseparably connected with the progress and advancement of the town in which we live. Since it has been incorporated Birmingham has made gigantic strides, not only in material prosperity, but in intelligence, education, and public spirit; and I venture to hope that future mayors, aldermen, and councillors will be animated by the spirit which possessed their ancestors, and will be willing to support every scheme for the welfare of those amongst whom we live, and so we shall continue faithfully to represent the intelligence and patriotism of the town of Birmingham.

## HOWARD STREET INSTITUTE

BIRMINGHAM, NOVEMBER 19, 1874

[From a reply to a vote of thanks for presiding at a lecture at Howard Street Institute on 'School Children and their Homes.']

BIRMINGHAM, as you know, is not my native town—I wish it were; but it is the town of my adoption and predilection. I have lived here for about twenty years, and I think it the finest, the most intelligent and patriotic town on the face of the universe, and I am prepared to sustain that opinion before any audience in or out of Birmingham. At the same time, my favourite town—I admit it with grief and sorrow—is not perfect, and the question to which I am specially devoting my attention during the present year is one so closely allied to the one we have been considering to-night, that I believe Mr. Gooch was right in connecting the two. How can we educate the children of the town when, after keeping them in school for a few hours, we send them for the rest of the night to homes where the education they receive is of the worst possible kind, where anything like decency, and honesty, and morality, is almost impossible? I do not think, mind, that Birmingham is anything near so bad in this respect as most of the other large towns of the kingdom; still, it is bad enough, and as long as this great blot remains on the fair name of the town, all its well-wishers are bound to put their shoulders to the wheel, and try to remove it, and so—by God's help—we will.

## THE WORK OF SEVERN STREET SCHOOL

BIRMINGHAM, NOVEMBER 30, 1874

[At the Annual Meeting of the Severn Street School, Birmingham, a Quaker foundation, famous in its day for good work, and what was called a 'British School' as opposed to a 'National School,' *i.e.* under Church of England direction.]

MY dear friends, I think Councillor White would tell you, that, when a few days ago he asked me to preside at

this gathering, I accepted with pleasure, without a moment's hesitation. You will understand that the Mayor of Birmingham does not lie exactly on a bed of roses, that he finds his time pretty well occupied, that occasionally he has to make his appeals to his friends to 'pity the sorrows of a poor young mayor,' and to spare him for other work. But I felt that this institution, which holds its annual gathering here to-night, had special claims upon me, and that I could not refuse myself the pleasure of coming among you. In fact, I hold it to be one of the duties as well as one of the pleasures of my office to give whatever sanction that office can give, whatever of encouragement and influence and support my position enables me to give to institutions like this, which is supplementing the work of the municipal authorities, which is paving the way for the good government of the town, and doing all in its power to promote the welfare and happiness of all our citizens. Now, although this is my first visit to you, I have long been aware of the existence of the Severn Street School, and have looked upon it as one of the peculiar institutions of Birmingham. For more than twenty-eight years you have been working, supplementing the labours of educationalists by doing what no one else attempted to do, and the history of your work is written upon the history of your town, and upon the lives of hundreds and thousands of industrious, well-to-do, and good citizens at the present day. Well, it seems to me that you can congratulate yourselves heartily upon the results which you have already achieved. Mr. White told me that you have already in connection with your schools over two thousand scholars, all of them over fifteen years of age, and of that large number more than half have passed the age of twenty years. Well, this leads to what has always struck me as a peculiar feature in your association. Your scholars and teachers do not occupy the ordinary positions which pupils take towards their masters, but you are rather a great association of friends mutually aiding one another, co-operating to repair the consequences of neglect and indifference which may have affected your earlier years. Well, now, setting aside for a moment all the

good which may be effected by your religious and social work, putting out of all count the kindred organisations, the temperance societies, the savings banks, and so on, which are connected with the schools, what marvellous good has been effected simply by your educational work. It is not too much to say that you have in the long course of years of which I have spoken endowed multitudes of your fellow-townsmen with a new sense, with a sense that has thus enabled them to appreciate the efforts and the works of others, and to communicate their own ideas. You have opened to these persons, who have suffered many of them from the shameful neglect of the State in past years—you have opened to them a new world, a land which would have been untrodden but for your guidance; and you have distinctly bestowed upon them a second sight, you have opened for them an actual vision, the deprivation of which is as sad and disastrous as that of physical sight. Well, when I am able to say so much for your past work, it may appear strange that I should wish to see that work shortly coming to an end. But the fact is, it must be evident that changes are imminent. It must be evident that schoolmasters are abroad with a vengeance, and there are buildings rising up which, to my mind, are the most splendid of all the buildings in Birmingham—great schools for your children, provided lavishly with every appliance for education, provided with ground for the recreation of the children, so that their physical as well as their mental health is cared for; and these schools I firmly believe will effect a wonderful change in a few years in the character of our population. I remember, four years ago, when the first election was held, that some person, who by this time must be heartily ashamed of his work, covered the walls with placards, in which the people of Birmingham were invited to vote against those who had brought this School Board into the town. I said then what I say now, that it is the proudest act of my life to have had a part, however humble, in bringing the School Board into your midst. And I rejoice to think that once there it never can be moved away; and already, in that short period, we

have great results upon which to congratulate ourselves. These schools, upon which I have spoken, are filling almost as fast as they are erected. Already the average attendance in this town is increased by twelve thousand children, who otherwise in the future might have been forced, under circumstances of great discouragement and difficulty, to repair the consequences of this previous neglect. And this additional attendance is not the only thing. Besides those who are in regular attendance, there are an enormous number who are irregular attendants at the school, and although they make very unsatisfactory scholars at present, yet their presence in the school familiarises them and their parents, and the families from which they come, with the idea of the school as a necessity in the life of a child, and that must bear fruit in a future generation; so I think I am not too sanguine when I hope and believe that in the course of a few short years we may see a time when the children of this town will be in the position of the children of every great German city, and will leave school, knowing at that time all that you now attempt to teach their seniors. And, under these circumstances, you have to ask yourselves what will then become of your work? Is it possible that then you will have no longer anything to do? Well, I don't think you need be afraid of idleness. In the first place, the religious and the moral work of which I have just spoken remains untouched. There will be as much room, much more room for it, than ever, and this work will certainly be made easier to you when all children have had some foundation of instruction upon which you can base your teaching. But even if I look to your educational work, I believe that may well go on with increasing good and increasing results, if only it be changed somewhat in its character. Already, I think there are some subjects beyond mere reading and writing which you might with advantage add to your present work. You know, at this moment, sanitary reform is a hobby of mine, and I don't hesitate to appeal to this great organisation for its co-operation and support in the work which my colleagues and myself have undertaken. You can do much to help us, and

you, as much as any in this town, are interested in that work. In the first place, you are interested in it because you have practical experience of the results of unhealthy homes and uncomfortable dwellings in your own persons; and, in the second place, you are interested in it because you must have found that your educational and other work is hindered by the obstacles which the existing sanitary condition of the town interposes. It seems to me that education must be a perfect farce when the instruction at the school is contradicted by the experience at home. It seems to me absurd to preach morality to people who are herded together in conditions in which common decency is impossible. It seems to me ridiculous to talk of temperance to men who have every reason to leave their homes, and are driven thereby to the public-house. It seems to me monstrous to preach thrift to those whose whole lives are wasted in a perpetual struggle with disease and death. I think you could do much to remedy this state of things. Remember, it has not been brought about solely by the laxness and supineness of your local authorities, nor is it due entirely to the rapacity and selfishness of the owners of small-house property. It is due as much as anything to the ignorance of the people, to their utter want of knowledge of the conditions of cleanliness and health. Many of them are so hardened to filth that they have become indifferent to it. Many of them are absolutely unaware of the blessings of pure air and pure water. I saw, some time ago, a little exercise which was written by a small boy, who was told by his teacher to write a theme upon pure water, and it ran somewhat in this way: 'Water is good to drink and to swim in, and to skate on when frozen. When I was a little baby, my nurse used to bathe me in water. I have been told that the Indians don't wash themselves more than once in ten years. I wish I was an Indian.' I can assure you there are many people in this town who have no need to wish themselves Indians, but are already in a condition which any ordinary savage would be ashamed of. I don't think you need confine your teachings to this matter. Considering

the character and treatment of disease in this town, nothing is more frightful, more disheartening, than the extraordinary infant mortality of Birmingham and all our large cities. You hardly ever enter a working man's house without finding that the parents have lost one or two or more of their children, and if you inquire further, you find that many of those have been slain by measles, or croup, or whooping-cough. These are diseases which attack the poor. There are few of us who have not passed through all of them; none of us, probably, who have not had one or other of them in our families; but the difference between the well-to-do and the poor in this matter is this—that whereas the children of the rich get well, the children of the poor die, and the reason why they die of these preventible diseases is that their parents in most cases are utterly ignorant of the nature and the simple remedies which should be employed, and of the kind of care and attention which they require; and I do think an immense boon would be conferred upon the population by such an association as this, if you were to devote some time to explaining this matter, to some simple lessons upon the treatment of disease and upon the necessary conditions of health. One other suggestion I would venture to make. The great difficulty, as it seems to me, in connection with the working classes of this country, is their want of proper recreation. Even when we have taught every working man and woman to read and write, they cannot go on reading and writing perpetually. They would get tired of it. The greatest student in the world wants some change in his occupation, and, unfortunately, our working men seem to have very little idea of recreation. Some time ago Mr. Mundella, the member for Sheffield, told me that in Saxony, where his works are, it is the commonest thing in the world to see knots of workmen, four or five in number, practising the masterpieces of the greatest musicians on stringed instruments in their own little rooms, or before their houses, or joining in vocal exercises. I don't think the English people are less musical than any other, and I have wondered sometimes why their tastes seem to be so little

cultivated. Whenever you have a working man in England who feels inclined to learn some musical instrument, he seems to me invariably to run into the brass band. A brass band is a very pleasant institution, especially a long way off; but you can readily imagine that when a member of a brass band takes to practising the big drum in a court crowded with houses, or when he endeavours to perfect himself in the use of the cornet out of his bedroom window about twelve o'clock at night, he is anything but a pleasant neighbour. My suggestion is, therefore, that more time should be devoted, in the case of persons who have some musical taste, to the practice of stringed instruments, to instruments which are capable of the greatest mastery, which give pleasure not only to the performers but also to those who may be standing by—and in this way, at any rate, we should create a new and perfectly innocent interest for many of the dwellers in our crowded cities. And now I will conclude by saying, although I don't venture to predict what may be the particular future which you may mark out in Severn Street, I hope—I cannot doubt when I see this admirable machinery and this splendid organisation—that you won't allow the instrument to rust for want of work, and that those who have so ably conducted the association up to the present time will still find useful employment for its members.

## ON THE SANITARY CONDITION OF LARGE TOWNS

### Birmingham, January 13, 1875

[At the close of 1874 Mr. Chamberlain, as Mayor of Birmingham, had conceived the idea of a conference of municipal authorities and others interested in the sanitation of large towns, in order, in his own words, 'to create a sound public opinion on the subject.' The conference took place on January 13, 1875, a date memorable for the success with which this end was achieved. The following was Mr. Chamberlain's opening address.]

When I first conceived the idea of summoning such a meeting, I limited my expectations to the hope of gathering

together some hundred or so of practical sanitarians, who might be willing to confer with their fellow-workers in Birmingham as to their difficulties, and the means they had taken to overcome them. Now, however, I have to report that between eight hundred and nine hundred ladies and gentlemen have accepted the invitation to be present to-day ; that at least one hundred corporations and local boards are represented by their mayors, the chairmen of their health committees, or their medical officers of health, and that the whole subject has engaged the particular attention of the medical and sanitary press of the country. Now, of course, it is a great satisfaction to find that the importance of the question is in this way duly appreciated. At the same time, the result has been not a little embarrassing to myself, because the arrangements which were made in view of a much smaller meeting are altogether inadequate for the meeting as it stands at present. The time allotted is quite too short for the business to be gone through, and the room is not so convenient, nor does it afford such accommodation as I should have been glad to have secured had I known the importance which the conference would have assumed. At the same time, I hope the result will be that we shall consider this meeting as purely preliminary and introductory, and that it will open the question fully, and lead the way to further and still more important gatherings to be held, whether in this or some other of our large towns. Well, now, the object which I had in view in first convening this meeting was to endeavour to create a sound public opinion in reference to the questions we are met to discuss. For that purpose, I do think it is necessary again and again to reiterate them, in order that the public mind may be imbued with the importance of taking steps to obviate them. There seems to me to be a want of the proper sense of the relative importance of this question in the public mind. We know how easily we are all startled by any exceptional calamity—by a fire, or a shipwreck, or an explosion in a mine—which hurries into eternity some ten or twenty, or it may be hundreds of individuals. But the evils of which

we are going to speak carry off prematurely not units or tens, or hundreds of individuals, but tens and hundreds of thousands, and just because they are perpetually present among us, they become commonplace, and people adopt with regard to them a fatalistic sort of argument. We seem to do nothing because they have always been seated in their present state among us. It is quite true when some exceptional pestilence occurs, like the pestilence which has desolated the town of Over Darwen, public attention is directed to the matter ; but as soon as the cause is removed, we fall back to our original apathy, and excepting the district specially in question, nothing is done to prevent the recurrence of similar disasters. Yet I venture to say that the localisation in the case of Over Darwen was a mere accident. There are hundreds of districts in this country in which the same results may arise at any moment, so defective are their sanitary provisions. Well, the usual course in these cases is to throw the blame upon local authorities—to say it is owing to our stupidity, apathy, selfishness, or indifference that these results are obtained. I do not think that any argument can be more unfair or more foolish ; more foolish because, if we are to do anything radical in the way of sanitary reform, it must be by means of our local governing bodies. It is only through them that we can act upon the population in this matter. It seems to me, therefore, suicidal to bring into contempt and to depreciate the only machinery by which we can efficiently secure our needs. It is unfair, because it ought to be remembered that local bodies cannot be much wiser than the constituencies which they represent ; and were they wiser than the constituencies that elect them, and did they attempt to put their wisdom into practice, we know that all legislation which is in advance of the sentiments of the people is nearly always a failure. It is only when we are secure of the hearty co-operation of the people that we can profitably employ the powers entrusted to us. Again, in extenuation of this supposed negligence, it is fair to remind you that it is only recently that the legislature has vested in us anything like

sufficient powers, and what is even more important, it is only very recently there has been anything like a concurrence of opinion among scientific authorities upon the questions with which we have to deal. It is only recently that there has been anything like unanimity amongst sanitary gentlemen in reference even to the alphabet of science, and now there is a most considerable divergence of opinion with respect to the ordinary branches of the subject. I might take an illustration from our own town. The other day, urged thereto by the prevalence of an epidemic of small-pox in our midst and instigated by our medical officer of health, we endeavoured to make provision for the isolation of patients in a hospital of our own; and when we came to select a site, go where we would, we found the most strenuous opposition. We were met by clamour of all kinds from property owners and from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who said we were unjustifiably bringing a pestilence in their midst. While all admitted such a hospital to be eminently desirable, they were all of opinion that the place selected was the worst that could possibly be chosen; and that continued, although our selection was varied, until we went to almost every ward in the town. But this opposition did not proceed merely from persons interested in the question—who had a pecuniary interest in the matter. When the town council finally selected a site, upon the recommendation of our medical officer of health, a memorial was presented, signed by one half of the medical staff of the town, protesting against the undertaking as being fraught with serious danger to the neighbouring population. Again, as further showing the opposition governing bodies have to meet, the council had drawn up a series of by-laws for sanitary purposes in connection with the building of dwellings. One of the most important of these by-laws provided that houses should no longer be built in this town without through ventilation; that in every case a space of 150 square feet should be provided either at the back or the side of such habitations. I dare say that gentlemen who come from such towns where a similar by-law has been in

force for ten or twenty years will be astonished that in Birmingham, which claims to be at least in the van of all reforms and improvements, there should have been provoked the utmost opposition by this particular by-law; that we should have been assailed by a portion of the press with the greatest vehemence; and that we should be accused not merely by those who claim to be authorities in the matter, but by gentlemen having a right to speak, of promoting legislation calculated to do infinitely more harm than the evil it was intended to remove. I mention this to show the nature of the difficulties which local governing bodies have sometimes to undergo before they can successfully carry out schemes of reform. I venture to hope that this conference may do something to settle some of these disputed points. It may give us at least a firm foothold upon which we may take our stand, and it may afford a clear statement of the problems which wait for our solution. I do not believe that the ordinary public is at all aware of the enormous waste of life which is always going on in our midst, and of the frightful consequences, sanitary, moral, pecuniary, and otherwise, which result from it. Of course it is difficult precisely to formulate this waste. The only statistics upon which we can base an opinion are the rates of mortality in large towns. I am well aware that these rates must not be taken without qualification; that they have to be considered with the several conditions of each particular city or place. At the same time, when I find that these rates vary from a minimum of 16 per thousand to a maximum of 38 or 40 per thousand, I cannot for a moment believe that these enormous divergencies are necessary; I cannot doubt that the higher rates are abnormal, and might be considerably reduced by proper sanitary precautions. I find the same difference existing, not merely in various districts but in diverse parts of the same town, as well as differences in the death-rate, which exist in even a more marked degree between different classes of the community. For instance, in an admirable report prepared by Dr. Leigh, the medical officer of health for the city of Manchester, it

appeared that the average age of the deaths of the gentry, by which I presume is meant the upper middle classes, is 38; the average of the deaths of the working classes is 17. The proportion in Liverpool is as 35 years to 15 years. In other words, the well-to-do classes have a lease of life which is more than double the value of that which falls to the lot of their less favoured fellow-citizens. When we come to consider the infant mortality, which is at the bottom of much of these differences, we find that the variations are still more striking. Taking the case of infants under five years of age, I find that of every 100,000 in favourable districts 2400 die; in Birmingham the number is 9500; Manchester, 11,000; and Liverpool 13,300; that is to say, in great towns these infants prematurely die in proportion of 5 to 1 of the death-rate in exceptionally favoured districts. I cannot believe that these discrepancies are a necessary consequence of the natural condition of their lives. Well, then, coming to the whole country, I find that the late coroner for Middlesex, Dr. Lankester, estimated that every year there perished from preventable diseases in England and Wales alone 100,000 persons, and that estimate was confirmed by good authorities upon medical statistics. I venture to say, that if you put together all the exceptional calamities which from time to time stir and excite the public mind—if you add up the railway accidents, fires, and explosions, and add also all deaths from shipwrecks along our coasts, you will not reach one-tenth of this ghastly total of 100,000 persons annually done to death by our stupidity and negligence—annually murdered by the neglect of proper sanitary regulations—annually driven out of existence by the ignorance and apathy of the people. These figures do not represent the whole of the matter. It has been calculated that for every person who dies six persons might be assumed to suffer from illness, and it has been calculated that the loss to the country is not less than 10s. per week for each of these sick persons. I know there are some authorities who consider it should be estimated at £1 per week in the loss of wages and medical attendance. But, assuming the amount to be only 10s., you

will find that the pecuniary loss to the country from this cause exceeds £2,000,000 sterling a year. Coming to the town in which I now address you, I have calculated that the preventable deaths in Birmingham are something like 3000 a year—that that represents the difference between the actual death-rate and what we may consider the healthy and normal condition. Making the same sort of calculation as has been made for the whole country, I find that the annual loss in Birmingham from this cause is £54,000 per annum. I think, if we could only induce our population to make these calculations for themselves, we should have very little to complain of as to ill-judged parsimony, which saves hundreds of pounds in sanitary precautions in order to lose tens of thousands in the death and ill-health of our population. We must remember that local governing bodies have not merely to consider questions affecting the lives and the health of the people entrusted to their charge. We have to consider also their happiness and their morality. The circumstances of which I have spoken are fruitful occasions of misery, pauperism, intemperance, and crime. All this disease is produced by filthy, ill-ventilated, uncomfortable homes; those homes, in their turn, drive the people to the public-houses and worse places. It is usual to say that these results are due to the ignorance of the people. That is true; but it would be almost truer to say that this ignorance in its turn is the result of the conditions amid which the people live. What folly it is to talk about the moral and intellectual elevation of the masses when the conditions of life are such as to render elevation impossible! What can the schoolmaster or the minister of religion do, when the influences of home undo all he does? We find bad air, polluted water, crowded and filthy homes, and ill-ventilated courts everywhere prevailing in the midst of our boasted wealth, luxury, and civilisation. A paternal government provides for our criminals in gaol 1000 cubic feet of air as a minimum; and those criminals, after their confinement is terminated, go back to their homes in which 300, 200, and 100 cubic feet of air is the maximum. Even the air they

have is contaminated by unmentionable impurities and filth. Hardly a gleam of sunshine ever comes into the dark and dreary courts which exist in the centre of all large cities. The dead and living lie together in the same room for days; all reverence is blotted out from the minds of the people subjected to such conditions; as for common decency, it is an empty name; it is obliterated from the category of virtues; and then, when these people whom we have suffered to grow up like beasts behave like brutes, we rush to the Home Secretary, Mr. Cross, in a blind paroxysm of terror, and ask him to give us the humanising influence of 'the lash,' in order to repress the instincts which our neglect and indifference have allowed to develop. These facts will be laid before the conference, and I venture to hope that the members and readers of papers will confine themselves strictly to facts of a general character, and to the remedies which they suggest for adoption. This is not a conference for discussing specialities, or for ventilating individual theories of sanitary reform or private inventions. I do not mean to say that that may not be done with advantage at some future meeting. But to-day I do hope we shall have to do with systems rather than contrivances. We want to learn the views of those practical men who have devoted their lives to the subject, as to the best way of securing the cordial co-operation of the people in our efforts for their advancement and welfare. Probably the conference may consider the powers with which the authorities are possessed for dealing with this subject. In order to assist the discussion I have asked our town clerk to prepare and distribute throughout the meeting a digest of the statutory powers under which we work in Birmingham—powers which, with a little difference, will apply to the rest of the country. I confess that I have been astonished at the extent of the powers which are now placed in our hands. I do not think that it is an extension of this power which we require so much as the will to apply it, and the assurance of the support of our constituents. I am perfectly aware that the work of sanitary reform is necessarily a slow process. The

evils which we shall have to consider have been accumulating during half a century of ignorance and neglect, and it is not to be expected that we shall remove their results in a moment. I even think that we shall be fortunate if our exertions enable us to grapple with the ever-increasing difficulties which are arising in our way; but as we proceed we may see our way more clearly and may advance more rapidly. Of one thing only I am certain; and that is, we cannot afford any longer to sit still or stand with folded arms in the presence of so great an evil and so disastrous a mischief. To do so would not only be a shameful dereliction of our duty, but a positive danger to the state; for there is a danger in the continuance of this ever-widening contrast between the wealth and luxury of a few individuals and the deepening squalor and the wretched misery of a large class of the population. Something must be done, and that quickly, to make life a little brighter and a little easier for those who now groan under its burden, if our boasted prosperity is to rest upon its only sure foundation—the happiness, the welfare, and the contentment of the whole community.

## THE EDUCATION BILL: A MAIDEN SPEECH

### House of Commons, August 4, 1876

[Mr. Chamberlain was elected a member for Birmingham in 1876. The selection of Lord Hartington to succeed Mr. Gladstone as leader of the Liberal party was at this time regarded as a triumph for Nonconformity anxious to revenge itself on Mr. Forster for having successfully insisted on the maintenance of Religious Teaching; and interest attached to Mr. Chamberlain as a chief organiser of the Birmingham league which had been conspicuous in the contest. His maiden speech was delivered on Lord Sandon's Elementary Education Bill. It was followed by non-party speeches in support of Irish Reform, and of Licensing Reform on the Gothenburg system—the latter a recurring topic with Mr. Chamberlain, and latest pleaded for by him in 1894 at a meeting at Grosvenor House.]

I have so recently entered the House that I feel rather reluctant to trespass on its attention at this time. I feel

that I should perhaps best show my respect for the assembly I have been so proud to enter by abstaining, while I am yet inexperienced in its forms and practice, from troubling it with any remarks of mine. The subject before the House is, however, one in which I have had so much experience, that it would hardly be honest if I remained silent. The noble lord has stated that he hopes we have arrived at a satisfactory settlement. I fear, however, that I cannot congratulate the House upon the possibility of such a result. The grievance which it is proposed to remedy has been considerably exaggerated, while the effect of the new agitation which will be created by the amendment proposed to be made in the Bill has been altogether underestimated. Allusion has been frequently made in the course of these discussions to the School Board of Birmingham. I cannot expect the House will be induced by any remarks of mine to take a different view of the policy that Board has pursued, but I do ask the House, at least, to give them credit for honesty of purpose and for educational zeal. The facts connected with the Board were partly stated yesterday evening by the member for Plymouth, but the whole facts were not mentioned. In the first instance the majority of the Birmingham School Board were elected under the cumulative vote by a minority of the ratepayers, and the majority of the Board thus elected attempted to enforce compulsion before there was any choice of schools. They had not that regard for the parent's choice which is felt by the honourable gentleman opposite. Compulsion being enforced before Board schools had been opened, it became necessary to provide for the payment of school fees for poor parents; but the feeling in Birmingham was so strongly against the enforcement of the 25th clause that the denominationalists on the Board, in spite of their being in a majority, were unwilling to enforce the clause, and provision was therefore made by voluntary subscriptions amongst the friends of the denominational education for the payment of their fees. The amount thus raised was very trifling, and I should be sorry to estimate the religious zeal of these gentlemen by

their contributions to this fund. But there is one fact to which I should have been glad to draw the attention of the member for Leicestershire, were he present. The amount paid in fees, although small at first, exhibits a constant tendency to increase, and will soon have become of considerable magnitude, for when the poor inhabitants of Birmingham heard of their neighbours obtaining payment of their children's school fees, they began to think they might as well have the same assistance. After this system had gone on for three years, another election took place and the majority of the Board was reversed. When the present Board came into office they found some Board Schools in existence, and, rapidly increasing their number, they decided to remit the fees of poor parents in these schools, but not to pay any fees. From that time to this the fees of such persons have been remitted, and not a single complaint of hardship has ever been made. The religious difficulty is not in fact a parents' difficulty at all, and if the priests and parsons will stand aside, very little indeed would be heard of it. But whether difficulty arises from the parents or not, we are told that there is a grievance in asking the parents to accept education for their children at schools where no religious education is given. The Birmingham Board adopts the principle of the separation of religious from secular education, which is a very different thing from adopting a system of purely secular education. Mr. Cobden said, twenty years ago, that there were only two ways of conducting national education with any approach to fairness : one was to make an arrangement for paying for the religious instruction of all alike, and the other was to adopt the secular system. The honourable gentleman opposite seems disposed to adopt the former alternative ; but we must recollect that in that case the right of the parent cannot be satisfied by the provision which was made by the member for Oxford on a previous occasion—that we should still insist on reading the Bible in Board Schools. For what say the Roman Catholics ? We have in Birmingham twenty thousand Irish. Many of the children of those Irish are in Board Schools, and their claim

would not be satisfied for religious instruction by providing for the reading and teaching of the Protestant Bible. On that point the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is clear and decided, as is apparent from a recent pastoral of the Archbishop of Westminster. If, then, we are to provide as much religious instruction as the parents would in all cases require, we should, for the Roman Catholics, have to give religious instruction either by a priest or by some one authorised by the priesthood to give instruction, and we should have to make the same provision for others. We must, in fact, show a distinction in this matter of the rights of conscience. While I admit that we have no right to force on any man teaching of which he disapproves, we have to ask whether we should provide for every man the religious instruction he demands. I do not think we are infringing the right of conscience in refusing to accede to so extortionate a demand as that. The principle I take to be that we ought to respect the rights of conscience in so far as they do not interfere with the secular interests of the State. When they do so interfere, then they ought to be overruled, as was done by compelling the Quakers to pay taxes, although they disapproved of the war, and by punishing the Peculiar People for neglecting their children by not employing a medical man, although to this they declared they had a conscientious objection. These are cases in which the State puts aside the so-called rights of conscience, and I hold that it is equally right to put aside the claims of the Roman Catholics and other sects that the religious education of their children should be paid for by those who do not agree with them. I protest against the position of the member for Dundalk, who confounds secular with infidel schools. He maintains that a secular school is not necessarily an infidel school; nor has that always been the opinion of the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church, for in the United States those dignitaries were demanding that the schools should be made secular, because they said that injustice was done to Roman Catholics when the Protestant Bible was taught at their expense. The Birmingham Board is not hostile to religious

education. On the contrary, they are only endeavouring to carry out the principles laid down in the method adopted for the settlement of the Irish educational difficulty. Some ten years ago a memorial was presented to the Prime Minister by the Primate and the bishops and clergy of the then Established Church, in which they maintained that secular as opposed to religious instruction should be maintained. Surely, then, the Birmingham School Board cannot be accused of irreligion for doing that which their bishops and clergy desired to have done in Ireland. I am not prepared to contest the proposition that the present Bill is the logical outcome of the Act of 1870. To my mind, almost all the most objectionable clauses of the present Bill find their prototype there; but then the Birmingham system is also the outcome of the Act, for in that Act there is a separation under the conscience clause of the time at which religious and secular education is given, and all that the Birmingham School Board have done is to carry this principle a step further, by separating the teachers and the cost. The Birmingham system has the support of the majority of the religious people in Birmingham because they assert that the present system of religious instruction, as given by rate or State paid teachers, is unsatisfactory. To this effect I might cite the authority both of Her Majesty's and of Diocesan Inspectors of Schools, and of the Bishop of Peterborough. It is the opinion of the Birmingham Board that by throwing themselves on the voluntary efforts of the religious bodies they can secure more satisfactory results, and I tell gentlemen who say that it is an eternal disgrace to Birmingham that there is no religious education given to the children of Birmingham, that there is more religious education given, and more universally and satisfactorily given, than at any previous period in the history of the town. There are now 36,000 children in the Dissenting Sunday-schools of the place, and there cannot be fewer in the schools of the Church of England and of the Roman Catholic Church, so that there are now in Sunday-schools of the different denominations 30 or 40 per cent. more than the number for

whom we had to provide accommodation in secular schools. A great deal has been said about the choice of schools. I wish honourable gentlemen would carry out our principle in the agricultural districts, instead of there being only one sort of school into which the children are to be driven. Choice of schools is, I think, a mere geographical expression. In the town it means the right of every one to get religious instruction for his children at every one's expense; in the country it means the right to force the children into the schools of the Church, supported, as they are, by a rate more objectionable than the old Church rate. I look with alarm upon the effect of this proposal upon the country. I fear it will throw into the election of Boards of Guardians all that discord which has been found to prevail in School Board elections. I do not think that it will be easy to get Boards of Guardians to pay the fees for Roman Catholic children. I know how difficult it was to get these Boards to appoint Roman Catholic chaplains in workhouses, and I believe the same reason would induce them not to pay these fees. They will, I fear, by every legal means resist the payment, and as it will be left to them to say whether the parents are able to pay the fees, I believe in the great majority of cases they would decide that the parents were able to pay the fees. The amendment adopted by the Government has raised an important question of principle, which will again agitate, as it has heretofore agitated, the country. I regret greatly its introduction into the present Bill. It will, in my opinion, even justify what I call a factious opposition. But of this I am certain—that it will be received with great indignation by the country and will lead to much future agitation.

## THE DIGNITY OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE

BIRMINGHAM, NOVEMBER 9, 1876

[On this date Mr. Chamberlain, still an Alderman, but just then elected member for Birmingham, was entertained by the Town Council, and replied to the toast of his health proposed by the Mayor.]

YOU have spoken of certain great undertakings which have been carried, I am glad to say, to a successful issue, during the period of my Mayoralty. In your speech to us this morning you referred to the new duties and extended work which that has imposed upon the Town Council. I would venture to add that this in itself is one of those objects which we have always had in view, and which I know I hoped to achieve, because these increased responsibilities bring with them a higher sense of the dignity and importance of municipal work, without which there can be no efficient and satisfactory performance of it. They have brought with them, on the part both of our fellow-citizens and their representatives, higher appreciations of our obligations, a broader view of our duties, and they have promoted a pride and interest in our local work, which will always be the best incentives for the good government of the town. I have no sympathy at all with superior persons who sneer at municipal work, and at those who are unselfishly endeavouring to perform it; but, unfortunately, these sneers have a tendency to promote a result which they are supposed to deprecate. We have seen in the United States of America how the withdrawal of men of character and of ability from all concern and interest in local work has depreciated the standard of public morality. And although I firmly believe that the recuperative energy and the political soundness of the mass of that great people will speedily reform any defects there may now exist in their administration, yet I would deeply regret that similar causes should in this country, even for a time, affect the credit and character of our local work. In our local parliament we want men of the highest ability and culture to

keep alive, by their own examples and in their own persons, a love of knowledge and the appreciation of the highest intellectual requirements. On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary that we should remain in close sympathy and relationship with the mass of the people, whose daily needs and common wants should find fitting and frequent expression in our midst. That the Town Council should be composed exclusively of masters of arts would be unfitting for the representation of a great practical community; but I should also like to say that in my experience I have found again and again most hearty and generous sympathy with the highest intellectual aspirations in men who bitterly lamented their own deficiencies. These men are capable, from that very knowledge of their own neglected cases, to render notable and enduring services to others. Well, now, I claim for myself, and also to the same extent for all my colleagues, that we are actuated by an earnest and hearty desire to promote the welfare of the town of Birmingham. During the last three years we have had to make amends for lost time. We have gladly availed ourselves of the powers that have been placed in our hands. We have accepted onerous duties in the conduct of business in which all have a common interest, and which we have thought therefore ought to be managed for all, and by the representatives of all. We have opened a new park and a new reading-room. We have built new baths, we have improved the health of the town, and we have tried to improve its appearance. We have done something to the roadways, we have done more for the footpaths, and we have promoted that great scheme of improvement which will change the face of a large part of the town, and which we are confident will conduce to higher morality, greater happiness, and better health in very many of the poorest and most unfortunate of our population. And for the completion of all this work, and for all the other work which lies before us, we need and we ask the assistance and support of all who sympathise with those objects. If a man has leisure, and wants occupation, his taste must be difficult indeed if he cannot find some congenial employ-

ment in connection with the multifarious duties of the Town Council of Birmingham. If he is ambitious, what nobler position can he hope to fill than that of the first citizen of this great community? If he is a philanthropist, where else can he expect to be influential in saving the lives of thousands of persons and in bringing health to tens of thousands of homes? For myself, I shall always look back with pride to the lengthened term of my office as chief of this great municipality. I shall never forget the unwearied kindness I received from all my colleagues, nor the support which I had, not merely from those of my own party, but from many of the best and noblest of those from whom, unfortunately, on many subjects I must continue to differ. And, sir, I shall ever be grateful to you and to this meeting for the generous spirit in which they have received and acknowledged my earnest desire to be in my day and generation of some service in the town of my adoption and to make it a happier and a worthier home for its vast population.

## LICENSING REFORM: THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM

### House of Commons, March 13, 1877

[From a speech made in moving the following resolution: 'That it is desirable to empower the Town Councils of boroughs, under the Municipal Corporations Acts, to acquire compulsorily, on payment of fair compensation, the existing interests in the retail sale of intoxicating drink within their respective districts; and thereafter, if they see fit, to carry on the trade for the convenience of the inhabitants, but so that no individual shall have any interest in nor derive any profit from the sale.']

. . . Two hundred thousand licensed victuallers in this country are legitimately engaged in, more or less successfully, trying to increase their business. The result is seen in gin palaces blazing with gas and decorated with a splendour which compares intensely with the squalor and misery of those who frequent those places, and when it is seen that the

old respectable public-houses are being transformed into spirit vaults and saloons, everybody must feel that this expenditure has its sufficient motive and that excessive drinking returns a sufficient dividend on the investment thus made. Again, excessive competition almost forces the trade against its will to wink at abuses ; while, on the other hand, the managers of a corporation, acting on behalf of a community, with salaries independent of the amount of the sales of intoxicating drink, watched carefully by the ratepayers, and knowing that any proof of abuse will cost them their appointments, would set their faces steadily against excess. After all, the strongest evidence in favour of the Gothenburg system is its almost universal adoption in Sweden. I have seen it stated that the experiment has been adopted only in a single town under circumstances very different from what we have to deal with. On the contrary, in the ten years following the commencement of the experiment, every town in Sweden with a population of above 10,000, except one, followed the example of Gothenburg, and recently Stockholm, the capital, a city of 140,000 inhabitants, has, by a resolution of its town council, with the assent of the government, determined to put the plan into force. In these circumstances, it appears to me that the House will certainly be justified in conceiving, on the very best local evidence, that the Swedes, at all events, are convinced that very great and important results have followed from the adoption of the system. There is one advantage especially important for this country. The price of spirits in Sweden is so low that there is no temptation to adulteration, but in England what is sold in the small beer-houses is mixed with deleterious ingredients intended to add to its intoxicating power and to promote thirst ; and I am compelled to come to the conclusion that very much drunkenness is caused, not by the quantity, but by the quality of the drink consumed. A municipality dealing with this matter would provide, at all events, a pure and, so to speak, a wholesome beverage. In the great city of Hamburg, having many of the characteristics of our large towns, with a population of more

than a quarter of a million, and a very large working-class element, drunkenness, which has been very prevalent, has been greatly diminished by the adoption of a light German lager beer for the coarse spirits of the country and the Hamburg port and sherry—prudently reserved for foreign customers. English municipalities will have a great chance of securing gradually and by experience the substitution of some light beer similar to that consumed in Germany instead of the noxious stuff which now maddens and destroys a large part of our population. The managers of the corporations would be required, as a condition of their appointment, to revert to the old system and become bona fide victuallers, supplying food to the people as well as intoxicating drinks; and their houses will become more and more respectable working men's clubs, where there is no temptation to drink to the benefit of the house, or to indulge in excessive consumption.

# II. RADICALISM AND REFORM

## 1876-1886

*'I put forward, in 1885, what was known as the unauthorised programme. It is quite true, as I was told the other night in the House of Commons, that for this programme I was denounced by some Tories as a leveller and an anarchist. They, I venture to think, did not altogether apprehend what it was I was proposing—but I have also to bear in mind that, if I was denounced by the Tories, I got very little support from the Liberals, and none at all from these "new Radicals," who have now floated to the top under the exceptional circumstances under which we find ourselves. I want you to look at the results, and see whether, by joining the Tories, men like myself, who profess to be old Radicals—Radicals of the stamp of those of whom I have spoken—I want you to see whether we have lost by our action. The unauthorised programme consisted of four points. The first was popular local government, based on our existing municipal institutions, and extended to the counties. The second was free education. The third was allotments and small holdings for the labourers, in order that the people in country districts might be kept on the land, and given an interest in the soil which they tilled. The fourth was graduated taxation. I have been accused sometimes of advocating a graduated income tax. That is a mistake. I advocated the principle of graduated taxation, but I did not myself propose to apply it to the income tax. I had in view the house tax and the death duties. Now, I want you to see that under this Tory Government whom we are accused of having joined at the sacrifice of all our old convictions—I want you to see that all the points contended for have, at all events, received some practical application. In two successive sessions local government for England and Scotland has been fully conceded on popular representative and municipal lines. Free education has been conceded to Scotland, and no sensible man doubts that it must follow for England at no distant date. The Allotments Act passed by the present Government has given to agricultural labourers for the first time the opportunity of getting upon the land. The result has been most striking; and already the number of allotments in the country has been doubled or trebled. I have no doubt the principle will be speedily carried a little further, and we may hope to see some progress made towards the restoration of the yeomanry*

*class—the extinction of which, I venture to say, is deplored as much by strenuous Conservatives as by the most ardent Radicals. As to graduated taxation, we have had a development of the principle in the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, where it has been applied to the death duties, to which, in the first instance, I intended it should be applied, though I am ready to admit that at present it has been only on a small scale. Under these circumstances, as a practical man, and as a practical reformer, I am perfectly satisfied.*'—Speech at a dinner of the Liberal Union Club, Greenwich, July 31, 1889.

'. . . *Let me say, looking back, that I don't think we have any reason to be ashamed of our programme. The extension of local government, the provision of free education, the facilities given for the question of allotments and small ownerships, the great development of factory legislation—these constitute only a small part of the social and political reforms carried by Conservative and Unionist Governments during the generation to which I am referring.*' —Birmingham, 1905.

Mr. Chamberlain was elected member for Birmingham in 1876 unopposed, on the retirement of Mr. George Dixon, his colleagues being John Bright and Mr. P. H. Muntz. He had contested Sheffield in 1874, hoping to oust the venerable Mr. Roebuck—Thackeray's Mr. Goldsworthy—whose radicalism was not of the latest pattern. Mr. Chamberlain's entrance into Parliament did not coincide with the end of his municipal work. That was reached in 1880, with mutual reluctance, but the two activities were incompatible. 'I am so parochically minded,' he said at Birmingham in October of that year, 'that I look with greater satisfaction to our annexation of the gas and the water, to our scientific frontier in the improvement area, than I do to the results of that Imperial policy which has given us Cyprus and the Transvaal; and I am prouder of having been engaged with you in warring against ignorance and disease and crime in Birmingham, than if I had been the author of the Zulu War, or had instigated the invasion of Afghanistan.' This in some ears may sound like eloquence of the platform, but allusions, appropriate and perhaps necessary to the party politician, may not obscure the real sincerity with which the words were spoken. And the

speaker had been taxed insolently in Parliament with having a 'mayoral mind.'

Mr. Chamberlain's first speech, it has been seen, was on the Education Bill of 1870. Other early speeches were on the Gothenburg system and prison reform—non-party speeches which produced a pleasant, perhaps a surprising, impression of the speaker among his opponents, other than Sir Walter Barttelot.[1]

His bent was early seen to lie towards social reform, not quite in the tone and sense of his parliamentary colleague, Mr. Bright, and of the manufacturing class to which both belonged. He spoke on the state of endowed schools in Ireland (June 4, 1878), and other early speeches were on questions of local government, the prevention of cattle disease, and legal forms in regard to patents, bankruptcy, and merchant shipping. A further and general impression made on the House by the end of the speaker's first parliamentary session was his businesslike quality and his faculty of taking pains over complicated facts. He made his mark, moreover, in full-dress debates, notably on the Eastern Question and on South Africa. Inside the House he had attracted the friendship and appreciation of Sir Charles Dilke, and had asserted his independence, not in the most amiable manner, at the expense of Lord Hartington during a debate on flogging in the army. Outside the House his platform oratory was recognised as formidable, and behind him was the organised backing of the Caucus. Briefly, he seemed marked for office, and, on Mr. Gladstone's filling his ministry in April 1880, Mr. Chamberlain went straight to the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, Sir Charles Dilke accepting the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs—with his chief in the Lords.

Here was the very post for a practical reformer. In the session of 1880 Mr. Chamberlain passed two measures relating to the merchant service—one concerning grain cargoes, the other the payment of seamen's wages. In the

[1] See editor's note, p. xviii. The anecdote was first told by Mr., later Sir, H. W. Lucy in his pleasant preface to the little authorised edition of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches (1885, Routledge).

busy session of 1881 he contrived to bring in an Electric Lighting Act by which municipalities might adopt electric lighting by obtaining the consent of the Board of Trade, and without the cost and trouble of a private Act of Parliament. More important was the Bankruptcy Bill of 1883, read for the second time on March 19 of that year. It was based on a measure introduced by Mr. Chamberlain on April 8, 1881. The speeches on both occasions are reported obliquely in Hansard and are very long; their command of detail makes them remarkable. The Act of 1883 with its two main principles—the control by an independent authority of the actions and accounts of trustees, and proper inquisition into the conduct of the insolvent—did not prove a final settlement; finality seeming unattainable in any one Bankruptcy Act while human nature retains its turn for evasion. Mr. Chamberlain's reforms were amplified in 1887, in 1892, and again in 1902. But in the opinion of lawyers and business men this act was an immense advance on any previous state of the law. Great opposition was shown to clause 68 of the Bill providing that all money received from trustees should be paid into the Bank of England; and Mr. Chamberlain ultimately agreed that the Board of Trade, if required to, might employ local banks. But his calculation in defence of the clause,—that the balances paid into the Government account at the Bank of England, thus temporarily at the Government's disposal, would be equivalent to an income of £30,000—impressed even his opponents with the value of having a man of business in charge of the chief business department. Another needed reform introduced by the President of the Board of Trade was the Patent Bill, read a second time on April 12, 1883. Its object was to help poor inventors to a share in their own earnings. Hard-up inventors before 1883 were faced with Government fees so heavy, that not unfrequently they sold their idea to the first convenient capitalist. Mr. Chamberlain's Act reduced the provisional fees from £5 to £1 and the first payment from £20 to £3. For £5 the inventor was secured in his rights for five years, by which time it was fair to suppose that the

value of his idea would be fairly tested; £154 would then procure him a patent, protective for fourteen years.

A more momentous reform was the Merchant Shipping Bill which Mr. Chamberlain brought to its second reading on May 19, 1884. In 1875 Sir Charles Adderley—presently Lord Norton—introduced a Merchant Shipping Bill directed against the criminal shipowners who insured unseaworthy vessels far beyond their value or that of the cargo, and sent them then to sea—'coffin ships' they were called. The sacrifice of this Bill by a common parliamentary usage evoked the painful, intemperate, noble protest of Mr. Plimsoll, and legislation of a kind was passed in the session of 1875 giving the Board of Trade certain powers on a twelvemonth's lease. These powers were renewed in 1876, 1880, 1882, and 1883, but nobody pretended they were efficient. On January 15, 1884, Mr. Chamberlain took up the subject at Newcastle-on-Tyne (see p. 115), pointing out that the year before, one man in every sixty who went to sea had died a violent death, and altogether three thousand five hundred British sailors died untimely. An amazing agitation was now started by the shipowners, and Mr. Chamberlain complained that even the irreproachable among their members refused to help him. Mr. Chamberlain's charges of undermanning, overloading, and over-insuring may be read in his second reading speech. They were made with zeal and vehemence. Against these the United Kingdom Steamship Assurance Association asserted that it could trace no instance of a vessel sacrificed for the insurance money; and the shipping interest was resolute and solid. Individual Conservatives supported the President of the Board of Trade. But the Government, weakened in popularity by its performances in the Soudan, was alarmed. Partly to their timidity, partly to the tactics of the shipowners, partly, it may be surmised, to Mr. Chamberlain's outspokenness the Bill was sacrificed. As was said, Mr. Chamberlain felt this disappointment so deeply that he went at once to Mr. Gladstone and offered to resign. His account of his reception and his last words on his crusade were spoken at Hull on August 6, 1885 (see p. 178), where,

characteristically, and to the annoyance of certain of his colleagues, he had Mr. Plimsoll on the platform by his side. He had his consolation in the fruits of his labours in subsequent legislation. The report of his Royal Commission was issued in November 1885. In March 1886 while he was still a member of Mr. Gladstone's cabinet, a new Royal Commission for loss of life at sea was appointed, and its report, issued at the close of August 1887, in Lord Salisbury's second premiership, made satisfactory recommendations. The Acts of 1888 and of 1892 (backed by himself) and of 1894, realised not all the results which Mr. Chamberlain originally aimed at, but results of incalculable service to the mercantile marine.

Further reforming speeches of this period are those set forth in the series composing the unauthorised programme, with its proposals—*inter alia*—for free education, the readjustment of taxation and allotments of land to be created by compulsory purchase. In form these speeches are vehement and uncompromising enough. Mr. Chamberlain was zealous to see certain things done, and in his references to his opponents he in nowise minced matters. The 'old-fashioned Tories,' the Conservative leaders, are hit hard, and contempt is poured on 'Peers' *passim*, and on the circumstances in which it has been 'a privilege of landowners to exact an extortionate price,' etc. ; Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain 'does not doubt for a moment,' is 'in his private and personal capacity a kind-hearted and a generous man, but I say that as a landowner he has so high and arbitrary a view of the rights of property, and so low a view of its duties, that he is not a safe person to entrust with the determination of what shall be the powers to authorities of local government in such a matter'—the relation of a metropolitan landowner towards a metropolitan improvement. This is 'stiff.' Yet where every reader, of whatever shade of political opinion, must admire the vigour and sincerity of these remarkable speeches, even 'Tories' the most old-fashioned and sceptical may have confessed the complete absence in them of cant and unfairness, and an attitude

towards opponents which, in contrast with later performance—not confined to one side—of eminent politicians, savours almost of old-fashioned good manners. Moderate Liberals suffered the most under Mr. Chamberlain's assaults at this time; and the point was of prophetic value. When the fundamental question of Union brought Mr. Chamberlain and the Conservatives together, his social programme did not prove a stumbling-block. 'Three acres and a cow'—critics in their forties may recall—was much the object of innocent satire in the 'eighties at meetings of the Primrose League, with what Mr. Chamberlain kindly called 'its silly sentimental title.' But much of that policy was conceded abruptly by Lord Salisbury's Government when a statute of 1890 amending the Act of 1887 gave sanitary authorities power to acquire land for allotments. This was followed by the Small Holdings Act of 1892. The Local Government Bill of 1888 frankly realises the contention of the unauthorised programme and of the speech on 'Rich and Poor' at Glasgow on September 15, 1885; its extension was not blocked by Conservative votes. Whether mistakenly or not on the part of the Unionists, the actual provision of Old Age Pensions was left for a Liberal Government to effect, but it was a feature of the policy contemplated by the Unionists, and is of the spirit of, if not directly derived from Mr. Chamberlain's doctrine of 1885.[1] The Workmen's Compensation Act (1897) was another Unionist measure from the same mint. Consistent in his dissent Mr. Chamberlain voted in 1894 for Welsh Disestablishment. On the other hand, he supported the grant of relief to voluntary schools, a concession apparently

[1] Old Age Pensions were prominent in the Unionist programme of 1895, and had been strongly advocated by Mr. Chamberlain in opposition. The scheme was stranded between a select committee and departmental committee to which it was committed in 1899 and 1900; the South African War, and Mr. Chamberlain's absorption in that and in resultant problems, left it stranded. Progressive Acts passed by Unionist ministries and due to Mr. Chamberlain's influence on their domestic policy, may thus be summarised:—(*a*) Before the General Election of 1892, Acts dealing with Coal Mines Regulations, Allotments, County Councils, Housing of Working Classes, Free Education, and Agricultural Holdings. (*b*) After the return of the Unionists in 1905, Workmen's Compensation Act, and the Small Houses Acquisition Act of 1899.

at variance with his professions in the 'seventies. The inconsistency is admitted and explained. The militant Nonconformists believed that the Education Act of 1870 would kill the voluntary schools. Now that these have increased in numbers, to say nothing of efficiency, their replacement by Board Schools would involve a capital and annual expenditure plainly wanton and impracticable. Yet, last, but not least, of the ideals contended for by Mr. Chamberlain in the unauthorised programme, 'Free Education' was introduced by Lord Salisbury's Government in 1891.

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## CONCESSION

### BIRMINGHAM, JUNE 7, 1881

[From a speech made by Mr. Chamberlain to his constituents after the general election, with Mr. Gladstone's return to power and the premiership, and his own appointment to the Board of Trade.]

MUCH has happened since that general election in which you took no inconsiderable part, and I have been naturally anxious for an opportunity of submitting to you the proceedings in which I have since borne a share, and of asking upon them your judgment and your opinion. And, therefore, I have come down to you from the very thick of the battle which has been waged, almost without cessation, since this Government took office—not without hope, based on the experience of the past, on difficulties overcome, and on dangers surmounted—and not without anxiety and even alarm when I contemplate the future, which is still dark with many clouds. I hope that I may be fortunate enough to take back with me the assurance of your continued sympathy and support, without which, I can assure you, public life would be only a barren and thankless task. Now, there was one result of the general election which I neither foresaw nor predicted, and that was that I should be called upon to take part in the Government which was rendered

possible by the victory which you helped to achieve. I accepted the office which Mr. Gladstone graciously offered me not without some hesitation, both because I naturally distrusted my own qualifications after so short an experience of Parliamentary life, and also because I could not surrender without regret that full independence which I had enjoyed as a private member. If I had been alone concerned in the matter, it would have been a small question ; but I felt that when a member of Parliament takes office, his constituents also are called upon to share the sacrifice which he makes in this respect. A Liberal Government which pretends to represent the Liberal party must of necessity consist of men of different shades of opinion. They are all animated by the same principles, they are all going in the same direction, but the order of progress and the rate of progress, and even the instruments and means by which progress is to be accomplished, are capable of infinite variety ; and no man has any right to expect, under such circumstances, that he will always be able to have his own way. Every one must be prepared to make some concessions, and all must be ready—so much I have learnt in my experience in Birmingham—to accept and to endeavour to carry out the will of the majority when it is expressed after fair discussion.

## THE FRENCH TREATY AND RECIPROCITY

### House of Commons, August 12, 1881

[Mr. Ritchie moved:—'That an humble address be presented to the Crown, praying Her Majesty to withhold her consent to any commercial Treaty with France which proposes to substitute specific duties for *ad valorem* duties, to the disadvantage of any article of British manufacture, or in any way to raise the present rate of duties payable on such articles, and which does not leave Her Majesty's Government full liberty to deal with the question of bounties, or which would bind Her Majesty absolutely to its provisions for a longer period than twelve months.' In the course of the debate Mr. Chamberlain said :—]

At the commencement of the interesting and moderate speech just delivered by the honourable member for Preston

(Mr. Ecroyd), he referred to speeches from this side of the House which in his opinion contained references to subjects outside and beyond the immediate issue under discussion. I cannot but think that the same criticism will apply to much that has fallen from the honourable gentleman himself; but I do not make this a matter of complaint. On the contrary, I do not hesitate to say that the real interest of this discussion consists in those portions of it which have reference to the new doctrines of Fair Trade, Reciprocity, and Retaliation, of which we have heard so much and know so little, and with respect to which we are naturally anxious to have accurate and definite information. I had hoped in view of this debate that at last we should be able to grasp the phantom which has so eluded us. I confess that these expectations have been disappointed, and that even now after listening attentively to everything which has fallen from the honourable member and from previous speakers on his side of the House, I am still in the dark as to what they mean, and even as to whether they understand their own meaning themselves. It is gratifying, no doubt, to be assured, as we have been by all of them, that they are opposed to Protection and in favour of 'real' Free Trade, but it is difficult for a plain man to reconcile assurances with the other statements which they have made. We have had expounded to-night several shades in the new heterodoxy which seems at last to have secured the patronage of the Conservative party. We have, in the first place, my honourable friend the member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate), whose consistency we all gladly recognise, and who tells us he stands before the House 'unblushing,' the last chairman of the old Protection Society, the last rose of summer, for forty years left blooming alone, and now both gratified and astonished to see himself surrounded by so large a company. The honourable member for the Tower Hamlets (Mr. Ritchie) refuses to go as far as the honourable member for North Warwickshire. He tells us he is not in favour of Protection, but then he adds that he approves of countervailing duties, and that he considers that we should now do wisely to take up once more the weapons

which we have prematurely abandoned—meaning by this expression the duties upon foreign produce by which in former times home industry was supposed to have been protected. Then we have the noble lord the member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon). He is indignant that an attempt should be made to mix him up, of all persons in the world, with the discarded doctrines of Protection. He protests, in almost pathetic tones, his admiration and respect for the deceased leaders of the Free Trade movement ; and I cannot avoid saying in passing that it is a characteristic fact in this and similar discussions that those who agree with the noble lord are fond of expressing their respect for the Free Trade leaders and political economists who are gone from us, and who cannot repudiate the heresies which are now attributed to them ; while they are unwilling to accord any authority at all to the utterances of those Free Traders and economists who are still alive—who are the legitimate heirs and successors of the dead, and who continue and maintain their true faith and best traditions. The noble lord tells us that he is in favour of ' Fair Trade.' I have a great respect for the noble lord, though I am not able to take him at his own estimate as the true representative of the trading classes and the commercial interests of this country. But it is in no disrespect to his general ability that I challenge him to point out to the House any practical distinction between what he calls Fair Trade, and what the rest of the world have hitherto consented to call Protection. He complains, for instance, with regard to the Cobden Treaty that it bound this country not to impose any duties on French produce, while it left the French free to levy duties not exceeding 30 per cent. on the products of English industry, and he says that this is not a fair arrangement. But how does he propose to alter it ? He may, of course, endeavour to persuade the French to give up their duties and to allow the free import of English goods. He knows, however, that this is impossible, and that the only alternative open to him is to meet the French in their folly and to impose duties not exceeding 30 per cent. on our imports from them. That may be right or it

may be wrong, but at least the operation would produce a state of things exactly similar to that which existed under the protective system, which the noble lord professes to disapprove. On the whole, then, although the means are different and the language varies, it appears in every case, and in spite of protests to the contrary, that honourable members opposite do intend to revert to a system of Protection, although they prudently refuse to tell us the exact nature of the protective measures which they desire us to adopt. Although in this respect they continue indefinite and vague, we have at least as one result of the discussion a full statement of the grounds on which the claim for Reciprocity or Retaliation is based, and I am here to challenge the allegations which have been made, and to say with regard to them that they are, in the main, greatly exaggerated or altogether inaccurate.

In listening to the speech of the mover of the resolution, I have had occasion to ask myself several times what can be the object of the motion which he has made. I am driven to the conclusion that it is his desire, and that of the honourable members who support him, to prevent any treaty being negotiated at all. I believe that in 1860 the Conservative party did all in their power to secure the failure of the negotiations, and no doubt they are only consistent in now endeavouring to make it difficult for the Government to continue or to extend the provisions of the treaty then concluded. The honourable member asks the House to agree to conditions precedent to the making of a treaty which every one knows are impossible, and if they were accepted by the House no treaty at all would be practicable. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has already pointed out, forcibly and conclusively, that under this resolution if the French Government offered a treaty which on ninety-nine points out of a hundred was a great amelioration of the existing Convention, the Government would be unable to agree to it if, on the hundredth point, however unimportant it might be, there were any increase of duty, however small. But I want more particularly to call the

attention of the House to the third condition in the resolution of the honourable member. We are, in the words of the resolution, to conclude no treaty which does not leave us 'full liberty to deal with the question of bounties.' There is no doubt that this is aimed at the 'most favoured nation clause' which has been asserted on other occasions against the proposal of the honourable member to impose what he calls countervailing duties in the case of sugar. The effect of this condition would be, taken with those which precede it, that not only would the Government be unable to make what is ordinarily known as a commercial treaty, but they would not even be allowed to fall back upon a simple 'most favoured nation clause,' under which, in the case both of France and other countries, English trade has derived the most striking advantages, and without which it would be possible for France to impose differential duties against all articles of English manufacture. On what ground is this condition to be imposed? It cannot be necessary in the case of the shipping bounties which the French have recently, most imprudently and foolishly in my opinion, undertaken to grant. There is nothing, I believe, in the treaty stipulations which would interfere with the right of the Government to re-enact the Navigation Laws if they were silly enough to do so, after the experience of the past, and with full knowledge of the enormous and unexampled extension of British shipping which has taken place since the repeal of that legislation, and which has made the mercantile marine of this country the envy and astonishment of the world. And as regards sugar, whatever might have been the case in the past, there is now no ground for interference on this head either. In the course of the last eighteen months the French Government have reduced the duty on sugar by one-half, and have altered the method of testing for drawback, and by these two changes they have, in the opinion of the experts whom I have consulted, reduced the drawbacks until there is now no bounty at all, or at least no bounty of the slightest practical importance on the export of refined sugar. But suppose that my information is incorrect and that there

still exists a bounty, or that one results in the future from changes in manufacture. In this case who is to decide the amount of countervailing duty which is to be imposed as against the bounty? There is not the slightest agreement between the different representatives of sugar refiners, the Board of Trade, and other authorities, and the French Government and their experts, as to what is the precise amount of bounty in each case. Is it likely that any nation will allow us to be judge in our own cause, and to assert, as against their information and belief, the amount of duty which we are entitled to levy without infringing the 'most favoured nation clause?' The only result of such an attempt would be to lead to disputes and retaliation. The 'most favoured nation clause' would be whittled away until it practically ceased to exist, to the great injury of British commerce.

I say, then, that it is impossible to regard the resolution otherwise than as an indication of the desire of the party opposite that no treaty at all should be concluded with France. The honourable member for the Tower Hamlets has said that the people of this country would be unwilling to accept any treaty that did not greatly improve the existing condition of things. [Mr. Ritchie: I did not say so. What I said was that the people of this country would not accept any treaty which was not on equal terms with the treaty of 1860.] I accept the honourable member's correction; but if he did not say so, other speakers in the debate, and notably the noble lord, the member for Liverpool, pressed his contention up to the limit I have stated. But though the noble lord, by putting forward impracticable demands, would do his best to make a treaty impossible, I cannot doubt that he and his friends would be disposed to throw the whole blame for failure on the Government, and to ignore the part they themselves would have taken in securing this result.

Before going further, I should like to ask the House to consider briefly what has been the effect of this treaty, whose continuance seems to be regarded with indifference by honour-

able members opposite. I find that in ten years, 1851 to 1860, before the conclusion of the treaty, our average exports to France were £8,300,000 per annum. Of these, British produce, as distinguished from colonial and other produce, was represented by £4,400,000. Last year these figures had risen to a total export of £28,000,000, £16,000,000 of this being for British produce alone. This return is 17 per cent. less than the return for 1871, which was the highest year, and 10 per cent. more than the return for 1877, which was the lowest in the last decade ; and I quote these figures because it is necessary to observe that there are great fluctuations in the trade, and nothing can be more unfair than to take only selected years for purposes of comparison. Now, coming to the imports, I find that for the first period of 1851-60 the average imports were £11,300,000, and they had risen in 1880 to about £42,000,000. These figures are 40 per cent. greater than those for 1871, the lowest year, and 10 per cent. less than those for 1875, which is the highest of the decade.

But these figures, important and satisfactory as they are, do not represent the whole facts of the case. The returns of the Board of Trade, accurate in themselves, must be taken with qualifications and applied with knowledge. Thus the figure for the imports must be considerably reduced if we wish to arrive at the actual amount of produce of French origin which is retained for consumption in this country. There are, for instance, large exports of textiles of different kinds from Switzerland to Great Britain which come through France, and cannot possibly be separated in our returns from French imports. Again, much of what comes from France is taken into warehouse for a short time in this country, which is the great depôt of the commerce of the world, but is only temporarily held here, and goes on quickly to its real and intended destination in the United States or our own colonies. With regard to the exports, on the other hand, they have to be increased if the true amount of British trade with France is to be correctly ascertained. I am informed, for example, that British yarns intended for French manu-

facturers in the Vosges go through by way of Antwerp, and would consequently appear in our returns as exports to Belgium, although really part of our transactions with France. When these allowances are made it will be seen that, satisfactory as are the figures derivable from the British trade statistics, they do not fully represent the importance to this country of the commerce which has been created and stimulated by the action of the Cobden Treaty.

Passing now to more general considerations, I gather from the speeches which have been made that it is the contention of honourable gentlemen opposite, that during recent years English trade has been declining and leaving the country; that wages have fallen, and that great suffering consequently exists among the working classes; that the profits of trade have disappeared, and that generally the country is on the verge of ruin. They also appear to think that foreign countries have benefited by our loss, and in proportion to it. Now, sir, I challenge all these assertions. It is said that we take too optimistic a view of the present state of English industry, and I am prepared at the outset to make some admissions. I admit that the state of agriculture has been for some time such as to cause to all of us the greatest concern. I believe Mr. Caird has estimated that the difference in production from agriculture during the past three years, as compared with the normal average, has been equivalent to a loss of £150,000,000 sterling. Some other economists have put it at double that amount; and clearly it is impossible that £300,000,000, or even £150,000,000 can be subtracted from the purchasing power of the country without more or less affecting injuriously every other trade and interest. But this is not a question of Protection or Free Trade; and the state of things which we deplore arises mainly from the absence of sun, and the unfavourable seasons of the last four or five years.

Again, there have been special trades recently—as indeed in all preceding periods—which have been injuriously affected by special causes, and subject to special depression.

The case of the Bradford trade is the best known instance of this; but it is due almost entirely to a change of fashion, and is also independent of questions of Protection and Free Trade.

Lastly, there has been no doubt a most serious diminution in the profits of capital, due to the rash and violent speculation and over-production which prevailed a few years ago. The case of the coal trade is one in point. The production of coal in this country last year, which was the year of greatest depression, was, nevertheless, the largest ever turned out of our mines. The period when the demand for coal exceeded the supply was known as the coal famine, although even then more coal was being raised than in preceding years. But that famine induced a rise in price of something like 16s. a ton, and naturally brought into the trade a number of persons who opened fresh mines; and, although the demand has continued, the supply has increased in still greater proportion, and there has been a consequent heavy fall in prices. The same thing has no doubt taken place in other trades, and notably in the great iron industry of the country. But a loss of profit from such a cause must not be confounded with a loss of trade, or supposed to indicate approaching ruin. It has sometimes been said that grumbling is the secret of England's success, and no doubt while we are grumbling we are continually tending to improvement and perfection; but it would not be safe to accept, without further consideration, the complaints of those who are not doing so well as they think they ought, as representing accurately the general condition of the country. Statistics are against them; the irresistible logic of facts is opposed to the pessimism which sometimes prevails.

Let me call the attention of the House to some figures illustrating the more cheerful view which I have ventured to take of the situation.

First, as to our foreign trade. I find that, with regard to exports, the total value of British produce exported in the six years, 1869 to 1874, was £1,363,000,000; the total

value for the succeeding six years, 1875 to 1880, was £1,231,000,000, or a fall of nearly 10 per cent. But I must point out to the House that this fall was in value only, and that as, during the same period, there was a general reduction in price, averaging probably not less than 20 per cent., the real volume of our export trade has considerably increased, even during the worst period of depression, as compared with the period of greatest inflation.

And even if the value has not increased, and if the volume has not increased in greater proportion than has actually been the case, that, I may inform the House, is to be attributed, not to Free Trade, but to the action of my honourable and learned friend the Attorney-General. This statement may appear paradoxical, but the House will recollect that it was at the instigation of my learned friend that, some years ago, a committee sat, of which he was the chairman, to consider the subject of foreign loans. That committee destroyed the credit of more than one foreign country. They were no longer able to borrow money here, and as they could not get credit they could no longer take our goods. It cannot be considered a disadvantage that we do not sell to people who will never pay for what they buy; but the result, no doubt, was temporarily to reduce the export of British produce.

Coming now to the imports, I find that, after deducting re-exports, they were, in the first period I have selected for comparison, £1,701,000,000, and, in the second, £1,946,000,000, or an increase of about 14 per cent. There are some persons who regard the increase of imports with dissatisfaction, and it may be interesting to point out why it is that this increase has taken place. During the period referred to we largely increased our investments in foreign countries. The interest on these investments had to be paid, and foreign countries have paid for them by exporting goods, which have, of course, swelled our import returns. And if honourable gentlemen opposite, the advocates of a reciprocity system, were successful in erecting some barrier by which these importations could be arrested, what would

be the result? Foreign countries must continue to pay their debts. Not being able to pay in goods, they would have for the time to pay in bullion and specie; there would be an accumulation of the precious metals in this country, and that would speedily bring about a rise in the price of all other articles. When that rise has been established, our power to export would be diminished; the amount of our exports would be reduced until the balance, or excess of imports over exports, was again re-established, although the volume of each would be lessened, to the enormous disadvantage of all concerned. In other words, the effect of an attempt to redress the balance would be promptly to lessen the value of our exports, but could not ultimately affect the difference in amount between them and our imports.

In confirmation of what I have said as to the increase in the volume of our trade, I now turn to some items of our production. I have taken the figures which I am going to quote from an interesting article in last week's *Economist*, from which it appears that in the first period of six years, to which I have already referred, the production of coal was 710,000,000 tons; in the second it was 813,000,000. In pig iron the production increased from 37,000,000 tons to 39,000,000. The consumption of wool advanced from 1,064,000,000 pounds to 1,232,000,000 pounds; and the consumption of cotton from 7,215,000,000 pounds to 7,578,000,000. I might easily add to the list, but in all the principal articles of which we have returns the increase in our trade is equally marked. But then it is said wages have been reduced, and the condition of the working class is that of great distress, in fact we have been given to understand that they can hardly keep body and soul together. Undoubtedly there has been a reduction of wages in almost every trade from the level which they reached in the time of greatest inflation; but, what is also true, is that the purchasing power of wages has become considerably greater in the same period, and, as a matter of fact, it appears that the consumption of every important article of necessity

or luxury by the working classes has shown a remarkable increase. Thus the consumption of sugar, an article which the honourable member for the Tower Hamlets is so anxious to increase in price, has advanced from 42½ lbs. per head in 1869 to 63½ lbs. per head in 1880. It is not wonderful under these circumstances that the sugar trade, in spite of the desire of some of the refiners for protective duty, is in a condition of great prosperity—a fact which the returns leave beyond a doubt, and which is confirmed by information I have recently received to the effect that on a dissolution of partnership, in the case of a great firm in the north, while the original house is maintaining its production, the outgoing members of the firm have just purchased eight or ten acres of land in London on which they propose to erect a refinery at a cost of about £150,000, which will turn out something like 70,000 tons of refined sugar per annum. Then, in the same period, the consumption of tea has increased from 3·63 lbs. to 4·59 lbs. per head per annum; of tobacco, from 1·35 lbs. to 1·43 lbs.; and of spirits, British and imported together, from ·98 of a gallon to 1·09 gallons. It is impossible to ignore the significance of these facts, which show that whatever may have been the depression of trade, it has not yet affected the power of the working classes to procure for themselves increasing quantities of the necessities, the comforts, and the luxuries of life. There is one other article to the consumption of which I refer with some reserve, as I have been unable to check the figures, which I have obtained from an interesting statistical work called *The Progress of the World*; but in this book I find it stated that during the period of twenty years, from 1831 to 1850, the consumption of wheat per inhabitant was 270 lbs. per annum. In the nine years, 1871 to 1879, it had risen to 341 lbs., and in the same period the price had fallen from 55s. per quarter to 48s., which is a fact of the more importance and interest because it has been shown by Dr. Farr, in his statistical abstracts, that the death-rate of the population falls 3 per cent. for each 2s. per bushel in the price of wheat.

I may also refer to the subject of pauperism. If the working classes were being ruined in consequence of a mistaken fiscal and commercial policy, the result would be manifest in the Poor Law returns, but on the contrary, it appears that while in 1869 1,167,000 persons were receiving pauper relief in England and Scotland, in 1880 the numbers had fallen to a little under 902,000 persons.

As regards emigration, while the total number of persons of British and Irish origin who left these shores in six years, 1869 to 1874, was 1,218,000, in the six years between 1875 and 1880, the numbers fell to 850,000 ; and it is remarkable that in protected Germany during that period, emigration has considerably increased.

I must now go back for a moment to the excess of imports over exports, which causes so much anxiety to a certain class of persons in this country, and is regarded by them as a sign of weakness and proof of our commercial decline. I consider it, on the contrary, as a fact which ought to give us the greatest satisfaction, and I think I can show conclusively that this is the case. Let us take a comprehensive view of the question. I find that during the last forty years, which embraces the whole Free Trade period, the total balance of trade, or excess of imports over exports, is, roughly speaking, £1,600,000,000. Now how is it supposed that this is paid for ? It seems to be the idea with some persons that the whole of this vast sum has been paid by this country in what they call ' hard cash,' meaning bullion and specie. But an examination shows that during the same period the imports of bullion and specie have exceeded the exports by something like £40,000,000, and therefore the total balance of goods and specie together must be taken at £1,640,000,000.

Again, I ask, how is this accounted for ? Is it supposed that this country owes that sum to other nations ? Nothing can be farther from the fact. On the contrary, in the period which I have referred, the indebtedness of other nations to this country has enormously increased. It is now estimated at not less than £1,500,000,000, and no one I imagine would

put its amount at the commencement of the period at more than £500,000,000. Consequently, foreign countries, while sending us £1,640,000,000 more than they have received from us, have at the same time got into our debt to the extent of £1,000,000,000. This investment has been made not in specie or bullion, but in English goods, and if it had not been made our exports would have been something like £1,000,000,000 less, and the balance of trade would have been increased to the larger sum I have named. What does this enormous balance represent then ? In the first instance it represents the cost of freight, the carrying trade of the world, and especially of English goods, having passed almost entirely into English hands. But over and above this item it represents nothing more nor less than the profit derived by this country from its external trade and the interest from its investments abroad during these forty years.

There is another way of looking at this matter. Instead of taking it in bulk, consider the details of our foreign trade and let us follow out a particular transaction. I have seen it stated that in Birmingham there exists a profitable industry in the manufacture of idols for South African negroes, and another industry for the manufacture of guns warranted to burst the first time they are fired. Generally speaking, I observe that everything which is said about Birmingham is inaccurate, and I disclaim any belief in these stories ; but suppose for the sake of argument that this charge against the morality of my fellow-townsmen could be substantiated, and that a Birmingham manufacturer sells a brass deity to the negroes, or a gun such as those which were disposed of by the late Government to the number of 200,000 at the rate of 2s. 6d. a-piece ; then, if for either of these commodities the Birmingham trader received an ounce of gold, as he well might, in return, the transaction would appear in the statistical tables as an export of half a crown and an import of about £3. The balance of trade would be £2, 17s. 6d. against the Birmingham tradesman, and yet I do not think he would have any cause to be dissatisfied with the pecuniary results of the transaction. But why should what is profit-

able in the case of the individual become unprofitable when multiplied by the thousand or the million in the case of the nation? And yet this is the contention of gentlemen who fume and fret whenever the value of what we receive is greater than the value of what we give.

I have a few more words to say on the proposition that foreign nations have benefited during the period of depression in this country. This supposition is entirely unwarranted by the facts. There are periods of depression in all countries, although it is important to bear in mind that they are not always coincident, and that it is therefore unfair to compare the same years without taking circumstances into account. Taking the first case of France, and dealing with exports only as a test of prosperity, I find that the exports of domestic produce, which averaged in the two years 1858-9 £83,000,000, had increased in the two years 1878-9 to £128,000,000, an increase of £45,000,000, or 54 per cent. In the United Kingdom the increase in the same period was from £123,000,000 to £192,000,000, an actual increase of £69,000,000, and a percentage of increase of 57 per cent. On these figures I have to make two observations; first, that it is more important to consider the actual increase in money than the percentage, because, as the initial figures in the case of foreign countries are very much smaller than those of English trade, the proportionate increase may well be larger, even when the actual increase is very much less; and, secondly, I must point out that the increase, such as it is, in French trade is much greater than it would have been but for the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. In other words, while the internal trade of France has suffered by the cession of territory, the external trade has increased by the transfer of this portion of her internal trade, or a considerable part of it, to the statistics of her external commerce. If to-morrow Ireland were separated from the United Kingdom, no doubt a large trade between the two countries would continue to exist, but it would go to swell the exports, and apparently to increase the foreign trade, and would cease to be reckoned as part of the internal transactions of the

country. Taking these facts into account, it would appear that in protected France the advance and improvement in foreign trade has been much less marked and considerable than in Free Trade England.

I have already referred to the fact that in 1877 trade in France was so bad that a commission was specially appointed to inquire into it. In the United States the depression preceded that in this country. It began and finished earlier; but as a proof of its severity, I may mention that while from 1869 to 1873 the immigration into the United States averaged 200,000 per annum, in 1874 the balance of immigration over emigration was only about 1000. In 1878 the iron industry was so depressed that according to the trade reports nearly two-thirds of the furnaces were out of blast, while in 1866 the total exports from the United States, which had been £65,000,000 in 1860, had fallen to £27,000,000. Next year they were about double this amount—the fluctuations being largely due to the action of the Civil War; but they are illustrations of the fluctuations which take place in the trade of all countries at some time or another. I remember being in Belgium at Liège during the height of the depression of the iron trade in this country, when it was supposed that Belgian manufacturers were largely competing with us. I found there the same complaints as to loss of trade and profit; and I was told that the manufacturers were working at a loss, and selling only to keep their works partially employed, while the shares of great iron companies both in Belgium and Westphalia had fallen in many cases much below par. The fact is that the effects and extent of foreign competition are almost always exaggerated. Unfounded statements are made and accepted as true without inquiry, but I am confident from my own experience that as regards the hardware and iron trades more especially, of which I know most, though I think the same remark would apply to other industries also, there never has been for any considerable time together serious competition from foreign manufacturers with the standard industries of this country. Within the last few days I have seen an extract from a report

of the Chamber of Commerce of Berlin in which a protest is made against the Protectionist policy of Prince Bismarck, and if time permitted I might multiply instances to show that whatever the extent of the depression here may be, it has been in recent years paralleled or exceeded in every other country in the world.

And now, sir, I turn to a consideration of the remedies which are proposed by the honourable gentlemen opposite, for a state of things which, as I have shown, exists largely at all events only in their imagination. We are to adopt a policy of Reciprocity and Retaliation. But, I want to know, what are the precise steps by which this policy is to be carried into effect? Honourable gentlemen opposite do not agree among themselves. The honourable member for Preston (Mr. Ecroyd) is the only speaker who has gone into some details. He said that it is the duty of our working men to make some sacrifice in order to reconquer the free and fair trade which we have lost. There is no doubt about the sacrifice which the working men would have to make in order to adopt the policy of the honourable gentleman. His view appears to be this—and I do not say there is not an appearance of justification for it—we are to retaliate on foreign countries by putting on protective duties in order to induce them to take off the duties which they now levy on our goods. The honourable gentleman appeared to consider that his proposal was a temporary expedient, to be adopted with reluctance and regret, and to be abandoned as soon as possible. But suppose foreign countries are not persuaded by the honourable gentleman, or by his retaliatory policy, to take off their duties? How long is the experiment to last? Is it to be for five years, or for ten years, or for twenty years, or for ever, that the working classes are to be called upon to make the sacrifices which it is admitted will be entailed upon them?

Then, again, on what goods are we to retaliate? On which of our imports are we to put duties? That is a question of cardinal importance on which the advocates of Reciprocity ought to, but do not, agree. Does the honourable gentle-

man propose, for instance, to tax foreign manufactures? I understand him to say that it would be foolish in the last degree to attempt to put duties on the principal manufactures of foreign countries. [Mr. Eckroyd explained that he meant that it would be foolish to put the *same* duties. What he proposed was to put *moderate* duties on foreign manufactures.] I am glad to have the explanation of the honourable member. I understand that if the foreigner charges 40 or 50 per cent. duty on English manufactures, the honourable member would retaliate by putting 10 per cent. on the manufactures of the foreigner. But the honourable member is inconsistent in such a proposal. He stands up as the advocate of 'Fair' trade, but does he not see that it is just as unfair that there should be duties, say of 40 per cent. on one side and 10 per cent. on the other, as if there were 30 per cent. on one side and none on the other? Unless the duties imposed by us are the same as those imposed against us, it is clear that trade will not be fair, although it will no longer be free. But there is another point which I submit to the consideration of the House. England is of all countries the most vulnerable in this matter—that is to say, in consequence of the Protectionist policy of foreign countries, we export a great deal more than we import in the way of foreign manufactures. [Mr. Ecroyd: The great bulk of our exports go to India and China.] I challenge the view of the honourable member, and I say that there is no country with which we have trade of any importance to which our exports of manufactured goods are not in excess of our imports. Take the case of the United States as an example. That is the worst instance of Protection with which we have to deal. I am speaking from memory, and I do not pledge myself to the exact figure, but, roughly speaking I am under the impression that we export about £16,000,000 of manufactured goods to the United States, while our imports are only about £3,000,000, the rest, and great bulk of our imports, consisting entirely of raw materials and food; and, therefore, such a commercial war as the honourable member proposes

would do us more harm than the foreigner, who might retaliate on our retaliation by prohibiting, or still further increasing his duties on, our goods, or even by putting a duty on the exports of articles which we do not produce for ourselves.

I have already asked how long these sacrifices are to be imposed on the working men: for ten, for twenty, or for thirty years? [Mr. Ecroyd: No, no.] The honourable member only intends it as a temporary expedient, but the effect of such a policy will be to foster weak industries unsuited to the country, such, for instance, as those which existed in Coventry or at Bethnal Green, which, even in the times of Protection, had only an unhealthy life, and which, when the time of experiment ceased, would be immediately destroyed, carrying with them in their ruin the fortunes of all who had been tempted by this mistaken policy to engage in them. Sir, I have already detained the House too long in answer to the speeches which have been made. If I am to undertake to answer arguments in the nature of interjections, I am afraid I shall have to make an excessive demand on the patience of the honourable members. But the answer which I have made to the honourable member for Preston does not satisfy the honourable member for the Tower Hamlets. It is the difficulty of this subject that every man has his own separate specific, though all call it by the same name of Reciprocity; but the Reciprocity of the Tower Hamlets differs from the Reciprocity of Preston and the Reciprocity of the Tower Hamlets differs at different times in the evening. What I now understand the honourable member for the Tower Hamlets to say is that we ought to put a duty, not on manufactures generally, but on wines, and gloves, and silks. As regards silks and gloves, I have the same answer to make which I have already made to the honourable member for Preston. If they are not industries which can be maintained in this country without Protection, it would be most imprudent and unwise to foster them by unnatural means, and the result would only end in the misery

and suffering of all concerned. Wine, no doubt, stands on a different footing. The duty on wine and on spirits is not protective: it is partly fiscal and partly moral, and might be dealt with upon those considerations; and if the treaty negotiations with France should break down, the English Government would be perfectly justified in dealing with the wine and spirit duties as they thought best for the interests of the country.

Well then, does any one propose to put a duty on raw materials? The honourable member for Preston, in the speech which he made at Exeter Hall, protested against so suicidal a proposal. Is it conceivable that we should ever be foolish enough to do away with the foundation of a great part of our trade, namely, the freedom with which we receive the raw material? Take the case of sugar. Why is it that this trade has been so prosperous of late years, so much so that I have heard it currently reported that one of the leaders in this manufacture has made a fortune of one or two millions sterling in less than twenty years? It is partly, at all events, in consequence of the injudicious bounty system adopted by other countries which has enabled our manufacturers to get their raw sugar at less than cost price, and has enabled them to undersell the manufacturers of the rest of the world, especially in neutral countries. This is a fact which the Austrians have begun to find out; and manufacturers, both in Austria and in France, are naturally protesting against a system which places this immense advantage at the disposal of the British refiner.

Lastly, sir, is any one bold enough to propose that we should put duties on food? The honourable member for Preston no doubt has the courage of his convictions. He has referred to the sacrifices which he would require from the working classes, and he does not hesitate to make the demand upon them that they should pay an extra price of 10 per cent. upon the most important articles of their daily consumption. Well, sir, I can conceive it just possible, although it is very improbable, that under the sting of great suffering, and deceived by misrepresentations, the working classes

might be willing to try strange remedies, and might be foolish enough to submit for a time to a proposal to tax the food of the country; but one thing I am certain of, if this course is ever taken, and if the depression were to continue, or to recur, it would be the signal for a state of things more dangerous and more disastrous than anything which has been seen in this country since the repeal of the Corn Laws. With the growth of intelligence on the part of the working classes, and with the knowledge they now possess of their own power, the reaction against such a policy would be attended by consequences so serious that I do not like to contemplate them. A tax on food would mean a decline in wages. It would certainly involve a reduction in their productive value; the same amount of money would have a smaller purchasing power. It would mean more than this, for it would raise the price of every article produced in the United Kingdom, and it would indubitably bring about the loss of that gigantic export trade which the industry and energy of the country, working under conditions of absolute freedom, has been able to create.

Sir, I think I have now dealt in turn with the arguments which have been brought before the House. I may summarise my conclusions by quoting to the House the opinion of one entitled to respect as an authority on this subject. The extract I am about to read is from a work entitled *Twenty Years of Financial Policy*, and was written in 1862 by the right honourable gentleman the member for North Devon (Sir Stafford Northcote). It is, in my opinion, as applicable to the present state of things as it was to the time when it was written, and I do not suppose that the right honourable gentleman has swerved since then one iota from the views which he has so well expressed. He says:—

'The great fiscal and commercial measures of the last twenty years have wrought a wonderful change in the circumstances of the country. A complete revolution has taken place in many parts of our moral, social, and political system, which may be directly traced, either wholly or in great part, to the effects of those measures. Our material

wealth, too, has enormously increased, our trade has developed, and our manufactures have been carried to great perfection. There have been seasons of temporary, local, and partial suffering, and the changes which have proved beneficial to the public have sometimes pressed hardly on particular interests; but, upon the whole, it can hardly be questioned that the condition of every portion of the community has been greatly improved by the new policy.'

In conclusion, I can assure the House that Her Majesty's Government are fully alive to the feeling in this country with reference to present negotiations. That feeling is not keen for the conclusion of a treaty, and would not be satisfied with any arrangement which was worse than the one now expiring; but I believe it would be disappointed if any effort were spared to bring the negotiations to a successful issue. As long, therefore, as there appears to be a chance of a happy result, we will not be forced by unwarrantable and frivolous charges of concealment and secrecy, or by attempts to impose extortionate or unreasonable conditions, to give up the negotiations in a pet, and without exhausting every means of arriving at an understanding, honourable and beneficial to both countries. The commercial results of the Cobden Treaty I have shown to be of great importance—of great value to this country, and of greater value still to France; since the trade, large as it is, is a much smaller proportion of our total transactions than it is of those of our neighbours across the Channel; but these results are, in my opinion, overshadowed by the political advantages of the good understanding which has so long prevailed. I hope that, by the exercise of wisdom and discretion, and good feeling on both sides, it may yet be possible to renew and to extend relations which have contributed so materially to the prosperity of both countries, and to the welfare and peace of the world.

## PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

BRISTOL, NOVEMBER 26, 1883

THERE is a time in the history of Governments, as in the history of men, when having arrived at middle-age, with no consciousness of failing strength or power, we look both backward and forward, we survey the past in order that by the light of its experience we may measure accurately what it is still possible and desirable for us to do in the future. It is in this spirit that I shall venture to address you to-night. I am not going to indulge in any barren retrospect. . . . I ask you what is the subject which is the most important of all those with which we have still to deal? What is the subject upon which Liberals everywhere most emphatically, most unanimously, pronounce? What is the subject which is the root of all others and the settlement of which will give the greatest possible stimulus to all the reforms which the Liberal party have in their heart to carry? That subject is Reform, Reform in all its branches; but first and foremost the extension of the suffrage. Now a Liberal Government, every member of which is pledged to this extension, which has promised to do its best to cope with this subject during the present Parliament, would be liable, I cannot help saying, to a charge of betraying its trust if it were to leave anything to hazard in a matter of such great importance. We are told the country does not care about the question. There is no excitement, only a little mechanical agitation manufactured by the Birmingham caucus. It is the old story. The Tories are always deaf and blind on this question of Reform until they get thoroughly frightened. Then they open their eyes and their ears wide enough. In 1832 they allowed the country to get almost to the verge of revolution; in 1867 they resisted all proposals until the Hyde Park railings went down, and on both occasions they yielded to panic more than they had refused to reason and to argument. Now, perhaps, they will give proof of greater political

wisdom, although I must say that they have not hitherto been ostentatious in its display. But, in any case, I may interpret the temper of this meeting and other meetings which have been held on this subject as a sign of your determination to secure for the unenfranchised people of this country their rights and privileges. I dare say you have seen that there has been going on a kind of discussion as to the order of precedence which the Government should give to their measures. It was begun at Leeds, it was taken up at Edinburgh and Glasgow, it was continued in London and other places. I have no authority to declare to you any settled determination upon this matter. We are still two months at least from the meeting of Parliament, and in the course of that time it is quite possible that things may happen which would disarrange the best laid plans. But at the same time there are certain considerations on the surface and evident to all which I may state to you, and which I think will help you to form a judgment in this matter. In the first place, I am very glad to see that in the discussions which have hitherto taken place there has been very little real divergence of opinion. The gentlemen who met at Leeds were ready enough to recognise the enormous value of a measure of local government for London, which should give to that great metropolis a municipal authority worthy of the name, which should create within its boundaries a local patriotism, which should develop a dignified corporate life in place of the sham which Londoners have at the present time. They were equally sensible of the needs of the country districts, where at the present moment exists a confusion of areas, rates, and authorities, almost intolerable, and where political education would be quickened and material interests promoted by the establishment of institutions analogous to those councils in our provincial towns, which have done so much to beautify and improve them and promote the health, happiness, and comfort of the people intrusted to their charge. Then, on the other hand, the gentlemen who met at London were perfectly ready to admit the claims of the millions of our

fellow-countrymen who have no voice at all in the government of the country, who, at the present time, are deprived of all their political rights of citizens, while at the same time they are called upon to bear the charges and perform the obligations of citizens. Therefore, the only question which remains is—Can all these omnibuses be driven abreast through Temple Bar? If you suppose that the House of Commons on both sides is sincerely anxious to settle these questions, and only desirous that there should be a fair and full discussion of them, then I think that in some way or another, perhaps by adopting the suggestion of Mr. Forster and sending the London Bill to a Grand Committee, we might be able to do justice to all these claims, important as they are, which come to us from so many different quarters. But if, on the other hand, any large minority of the House of Commons were hostile to any one of these measures, you will see that under our existing rules they might so prolong discussion on the first Bill introduced as to jeopardise our purpose, and prevent altogether any progress being made with the other two. In these circumstances, I think the country would judge us very hardly if we, by any freak of ours, allowed a question so paramount as the extension of the franchise to be elbowed out of the way by anything less important and less vital.

Now, we are told by some of their leaders that the Tories have no objection to the extension of the franchise in the abstract. They never have any objection to anything in the abstract. But that does not mean that they will give any particular support to it in the concrete. At the present moment they are chiefly curious to know what is our scheme of redistribution. This thirst for information is very creditable to their political sagacity. In the question of the franchise you have a simple question which raises very few points of principle, and those are points which can be easily and quickly decided. It is a question on which you may say practically the whole Liberal party are agreed. If you can only contrive to tack to it another question very complicated and difficult, on the details of which difference of opinion

may very naturally arise, then there is a chance that both questions may be got rid of together. We have had some painful experience in reference to this particular question. In 1866, under Lord John Russell, the Liberal Government brought in a simple Extension of the Franchise Bill and the same question arose. A cave was formed in the Liberal ranks, and a resolution was brought forward demanding that the Government should disclose their scheme of redistribution. That resolution was very nearly carried ; the Government only obtained a majority of five. Accordingly, their hands were forced, and they were compelled to bring in a Redistribution Bill. The moment they brought in that bill their majority of five was changed to a minority of eleven. They were beaten on an important amendment, they resigned, and the Tories came into office. You know what followed ; Mr. Disraeli educated his party and gave us, with the assistance of Liberals in Parliament, household suffrage in the boroughs and a great extension of the franchise in the counties, but the scheme of redistribution was miserably inadequate—a perfect fraud on the constituencies. It was accompanied by that three-cornered vote which has already destroyed political life in many of our counties, and nullified the popular voice in some of our greatest towns. That experience is not encouraging for a repetition of it. For my own part, I am not credulous enough to believe that the Tory Opposition will be conciliated by any proposals for redistribution which we can bring forward. On the other hand, it would enormously strengthen their hands if we gave them all the opportunities for discussion and obstruction which a Redistribution Bill would involve. The two questions are, to my mind, independent and distinct. There are two benefits to be conferred on the people of this country, two wrongs to be redressed. The first is an injustice which is done to many of our fellow-countrymen who have no votes at all ; the second is an injustice done to those who have votes, and whose political influence is nullified by the excessive weight and power given to the smaller constituencies. It may, and probably would, be impossible to carry both

these reforms in a single session ; but why not carry one of them ? Why should we delay giving a vote to men who are absolutely at the present moment outside the pale of the constitution, because we have not yet agreed among ourselves as to the machinery by which we will endeavour to estimate the proportionate weight and value of the vote which should be given ? There is another argument in favour of separation. It is a practical argument ; until you have given the vote, and until you have got the new register, it is absolutely impossible—there are no means at our disposal for knowing—what the numbers in the new constituencies will be, and until we have that essential information how is it possible that any really satisfactory scheme of redistribution can be prepared ? Altogether, I would ven ture to submit that this is a matter not in any sense of principle, but a matter of parliamentary tactics. Those who are honestly anxious for reform should do all they can to secure it step by step. Those who are opposed to reform in any shape, but are afraid of saying so, will no doubt be very wise if they can contrive to jumble the two questions up together, so that the one that is plain and simple may be overlaid and stifled in the embraces of the one that is difficult and complex.

But suppose that we have decided to introduce the Franchise Bill alone, and to introduce it at the beginning of the session, there still remain one or two important matters upon which it is right that the people of this country should make up their minds. In the first place, what is the extension to be ? I observed the other day that Lord Salisbury said that for his part he was opposed to this perpetual tinkering with the Constitution. Well, I agree entirely with Lord Salisbury, and that is such a rare pleasure that I am inclined to make the most of it. But I believe that, unfortunately, although we are agreed upon the principle, we differ altogether as to the application of it. Lord Salisbury, I suppose, would avoid tinkering with the Constitution by letting the Constitution alone until it falls to pieces. I, on the contrary, would deal with the Constitution so effectually

that it would never again require amending. I have never concealed my opinion—I have expressed it on many occasions —in favour of absolute manhood suffrage. As the basis of our electoral system it would be of immense advantage in getting rid of difficulties about registration which have practically nullified the lodger vote in many large towns, and I believe it would be conservative in the best and truest sense. The wider you lay the foundations of your liberties and institutions the more stable those liberties and institutions will be. I have no fear of the people. I would desire to call in the largest possible number of them in order to share in the work and responsibilities of government. But while I say this I am perfectly ready to admit that public opinion generally is not in favour of so considerable a change. In the large towns we are prepared for it. No doubt we see a good deal more of the people, and seeing them closer we are not afraid of them. But in smaller places, and among a different class of people, prejudices exist which time alone can remove. If I am right in my opinion, time and experience will bring conviction to all those who now doubt. Every successive alteration of the franchise has been justified by its results ; the next alteration, I doubt not, will also be justified in turn, and then it will lead naturally, and with common consent, to the change which I desire. But, in the meantime, I stand with the rest of the Liberal party upon the question to which all are pledged, upon which all are agreed ; and I will accept gratefully the extension of household suffrage to the counties.

And that brings me to a question which I think to be of very great importance, and upon which I will venture to address you a word of warning. I have observed some of my political friends—very good Liberals—have been much exercised of late with regard to what they call minority representation. I really feel that this anxiety is altogether premature. What we have to deal with, the evil against which we are protesting, is the inordinate influence and power which minorities have obtained in our system ; and really it is time that somebody should stand up and say a

good word for a down-trodden majority. Minorities are everywhere; they meet us at every turn; they rule us at every corner. A minority of the population, and only a minority, have any votes at all at the present time; of that minority another minority, not more than one-fifth, returns a majority of the House of Commons; and when this minority of a minority has succeeded in passing anything through the House of Commons, then we allow another minority, an infinitesimal fraction of the people, without any representative authority whatsoever, whom we call a House of Lords, to exercise an absolute veto over everything that we propose to do. The same thing occurs throughout our local government; minorities turn the scale in elections of School Boards, Boards of Guardians, and local boards. They exercise supreme authority in most of our great educational endowments. They govern our counties, and they deal despotically with all the details of licensing legislation. In these circumstances, our object should be to reduce the power and influence of minorities, and to give a fair representation to majorities. I am glad, I confess, to find that these friends of whom I have spoken are agreed that, at all events, the present system of minority representation is altogether bad and indefensible. Nobody has a kind word to say for the cumulative vote or the three-cornered minority system, and, therefore, here is a point of agreement. Let us all unite to abolish these stupid, silly, unconstitutional devices. When we have done that we can sit down quietly and see whether any substitute is necessary. I will say frankly, for my own part, that I do not believe that it is. I believe that what these gentlemen are trying to solve is a problem for which no solution can possibly be found. They are trying to devise some ingenious machinery by which minorities may be saved from the natural consequence of being outnumbered, and, at the same time, they declare that they will insure to majorities their full rights. The two things are inconsistent. When men differ, either the majority must give way to the minority, or the minority must give way to the majority. There is no other way out

of the difficulty, and if there is any hardship in such a surrender, surely it is much less when the operation is performed by the less numerous party. All that a minority have any right to ask for is that they shall have a fair opportunity for the discussion of their views, and that they should have a fair field and no favour in their attempt to convert the majority to their opinion. Does anybody suppose that in our system there is any possibility that this right should not be afforded to every minority? The minority not represented in one place finds its exponent in another. The minority in Birmingham becomes the majority in Liverpool; the minority in Bristol is the majority in the country; and so I might go on. And when I add to that the advantage of a free press and an open platform, there is not the slightest fear that any minority, however unpopular, will fail to receive at any rate a fair consideration of the views it desires to express. On the other hand, there is no system of minority voting that I have ever seen produced which does not give an influence to the minority more than its numbers practically warrant, and which is not, therefore, a misrepresentation of majorities. I beg and entreat all those Liberals who believe that the people have a right to govern themselves—all those who think that they will manage their own affairs much better in the long run than any selected minority of superior persons—I entreat you to resist the extension or continuance of these arrangements, which tend to confuse great issues of politics, and bring into prominence crotchets, individual peculiarities, and personal vanity, and do more than anything else to defeat the party of progress—the popular party—in the face of a united party of obstruction and privilege.

And now, gentlemen, in conclusion, let me impress upon you that it is no mean struggle upon which we are entering. We shall be confronted with a vigorous opposition, animated by the strongest motives to resist reforms which arouse their prejudices and which threaten their privileges. Success will be impossible unless the great masses of the people are determined to conquer their rights. Union, boldness, steady

persistence—these all are essentials in the contest. With these conditions victory cannot be doubtful and cannot be long delayed, and the result of victory will be worthy the labour and the toil. Government by the people means government for the people. Great social questions, which are every day becoming more important, can only be satisfactorily settled when the whole of the people take a part in the work of legislation. The complete establishment of religious equality, the freedom of education in our national schools, the improvement of the dwellings of the poor, the improvement of the condition of the agricultural labourers, the popular control of the liquor traffic, and such a readjustment of taxation as will proportion its burdens to the means and ability of the taxpayer—these are questions upon which I believe the great majority of the people are agreed, but whose solution is of necessity delayed till all the people are taken into counsel. They are questions the consideration of which is disagreeable to those to whom all change is objectionable. They would be glad to put them out of sight, but they cannot do it, for these questions are forcing themselves into prominence every day, and engaging the attention of thinking persons. I do not think that in such a programme as I have sketched there is anything which need give alarm to the most timid of men. Wealth and intelligence will always in this country enjoy their proper influence and due consideration. Property will be more secure when there are more owners of property. When its obligations are frankly acknowledged, then its rights will be more cheerfully conceded; and hence I look forward with hope and confidence to the changes which will be accomplished, to the great advantage of every class in the community, when the wishes and wants and necessities of the whole people are adequately represented in the great council of the nation.

## LOSS OF LIFE AT SEA

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, JANUARY 15, 1884

BEFORE I ask your attention to matters of higher and more general importance, you will, I hope, allow me to express, in words necessarily feeble and imperfect, my deep sense of the cordiality of your reception, and of the kindness of the addresses which have just been read and presented. I noticed in two of the addresses some passages to which I should like to make a momentary allusion. They are those in which the miners speak approvingly of the efforts they thought I was making to secure the rights and security of those at sea, and in which they speak with sympathy of the perils of a trade in some respects more dangerous than their own. This is a matter very near to my heart. The loss of life at sea is appalling. Last year, of all the merchant seamen belonging to British ships in the United Kingdom, one in sixty met his death by violent means. That was exclusive of those who perished in the fishing industry, and exclusive, too, of those who perished in colonial ships, with which we have nothing to do. Altogether, three thousand five hundred men came to a premature end, many of them in the prime of life, and many of them leaving behind them widows and orphans to mourn their loss. Now, this is a state of things which we all must deplore. I have felt it my duty to make every inquiry in my power which can throw daylight upon this subject. I have appealed to the able and impartial judges who have the largest experience in connection with inquiries into those disasters ; I have applied to underwriters who know something of the causes of them ; I have applied to my own officers and to the able and energetic surveyors of the Board of Trade who are charged to watch over the comfort and security of our seamen and the safety of our ships at our various ports, and who perform their duties, I will venture to say, arduous as they are, with great discrimination and courage. And I have applied to many of

the largest shipowners in the United Kingdom, to men owning among them a very considerable proportion of the whole tonnage of the mercantile marine, and from one and all I have received the reply that in their opinion many of these losses are preventable. I bring no accusation against any one; that is not necessary. But I say that I should be unworthy of the confidence you have professed to feel in me if I allowed one single day more than I could help to elapse before I endeavoured to do all in my power to remedy the state of things which is the cause of so much trouble and misery. I invite assistance in the work which I have undertaken from every humane man, whatever his profession may be, and especially I invite the assistance and support of the constituencies in the great shipping ports of the kingdom. I never stand before such a meeting as this—I never come forward to address thousands of my countrymen on great political questions—without gaining courage and strength for the work which is before me, without renewing that enthusiasm in the service of the people which is absolutely necessary to all who represent your claims or your rights. Without your strenuous support it would be a thankless task to give up the ease of private life for all the care and obloquy which necessarily attend public work, and it is the sense of being sustained by unnumbered hosts of friends and fellow-workers which enables public men to fight successfully, and to despise the slanders with which they are assailed.

## THE CAUCUS

### NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, JANUARY 15, 1884

[From a speech made on a nearing prospect of Mr. Gladstone's measures of enfranchisement and redistribution. The Caucus was a popular term for the Birmingham system of political organisation: officially the National Federation of Liberal Associations. On the Home Rule split the headquarters of the Federation was removed from Birmingham to London. The object of the system was—the political opinion of towns or districts having been first ordered and collected, in close touch with a central office, —to impose the will of the majority of Liberals on the National leaders.

The organising genius of the Caucus was the late Mr. Schnadhorst, but its virtual chief was Mr. Chamberlain. Out of sixty-seven constituencies in which the Caucus was established in 1880, in sixty the Liberal candidate won or retained the seat. For his further exposition of the system, see Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham, January 5, 1885, p. 130.]

. . . WHAT they—the Tories—want to do is to postpone our proposal with regard to England and Scotland, and it is for this reason they propose that we should take redistribution along with a simple Franchise Bill in order that both may be endangered. It is for this that they magnify difficulties in Ireland, and that they represent the defeat of a native force by a savage chief in Egypt as if it were an English disaster as great as the Indian Mutiny. These are their tactics. In the presence of them let us be steadfast, and we shall frustrate them. Sir Richard Cross let the cat out of the bag when he said that if the Prime Minister did not pass the Franchise Bill it might go over till the Greek Kalends. We do not intend that it shall go over to the Greek Kalends. For my part, I am sanguine of success. I do not think we shall have to wait long for it. The general interest in politics is growing every day wider and more intelligent. The spread of education has increased the appreciation by the people of the deep importance of all that concerns their good government ; and at the same time in modern organisation people have found more adequate means of giving expression and force to their opinions. I know that there are some who express alarm at the recent development of our Liberal organisations. They denounce it as the Caucus ; they describe it as a machine. I am not surprised that the Tories should dislike it. I do not wonder that they feel so painfully what they unsuccessfully try to imitate. These great open popular representative associations are not at all in their line. They are alien to the spirit of Toryism. The ' Primrose League ' is more in their way, with its silly sentimental title. I confess I am surprised when I find these organisations objected to and criticised by many who profess themselves in sympathy with the democratic movement. Why, the democratic movement would lose all its force without organisa-

tion. The difficulty of Radicalism in times past has always been that there was no cohesion among the people. Napoleon III. told Mr. Cobden in conversation that private interests were like a disciplined regiment, while the public good was defended by a disorganised mob. The force of democracy to be strong must be concentrated. It must not be frittered away into numberless units, each of them so preciously independent that no one of them can unite with another even for a single day. I do not object to your calling the Caucus a machine. Do you know what it is that the machinery does? It is a machine like the great invention of your distinguished townsman Sir William Armstrong, by which force is stored and transmitted and brought to bear with precision and irresistible force at the time and at the place where it is wanted. A machine does not make the power; it only prevents it from being wasted. So long as those are the functions of our political machinery, so long, I say, they are worthy the support of every true Liberal, of every man who trusts the people, of every man who desires that the will of the people should find fuller, more adequate, more effective expression in the legislation of the country. For my part I believe that the will of the people ought to be and must be supreme. The issue of this great question will soon be in your hands. Governments propose, but the people decide; and if you are as eager for liberty as your forefathers were, if you are worthy descendants of the men who won for us all the rights we now possess, you in your turn will not rest nor falter until you have secured for your brethren in the counties the full privilege and glory of citizenship in a great and free empire.

## THE BOARD OF TRADE AND LOSS OF LIFE AT SEA

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 19, 1884

[From the famous second reading speech on Mr. Chamberlain's Merchant Shipping Bill,—too long unfortunately to be given in full. It was on the withdrawal of this Bill by the Government that Mr. Chamberlain went straight to Mr. Gladstone and offered his resignation from the Presidency of the Board of Trade. See p. 80 and Editor's note p. xix.]

. . . I DO not conceal from myself that the great obstacle to anything like a satisfactory settlement of this question has been the irritation, widespread and very deep, which has prevailed among all classes of shipowners, and which has been founded upon the impression that great and undeserved imputations have been made upon their character as honourable men, which they were bound to resent. Well, I think the shipowners are in this matter under an entire misapprehension. I am not conscious of having made any such charges against them. If I have done so—if by any deficiency in the necessary qualifications which one has to apply to general statements I have produced this impression—all I can say is, I am very sorry for it, and that I hope any failings in the advocate will not be allowed to prejudice a good cause. But I will add this that, having read over the various speeches I have made on this subject, I am unable to see what is the ground for the impression which has prevailed among the shipowners. I have tried on every occasion to guard myself, in the most distinct terms, against being supposed to bring anything like a sweeping and indiscriminate charge against this class of Her Majesty's subjects; and on every occasion I have appealed to the majority of shipowners—to what I called on one occasion the vast majority of respectable shipowners—to co-operate with me in bringing about an improvement in a state of things which all agree with me in thinking deplorable. But the misunderstanding has existed, and has prejudiced

the settlement of the matter; and it therefore becomes necessary that I should try once more in the presence of the House to state what are the allegations on which I found this Bill. I will endeavour to state them plainly, and I hope I shall do so in terms that will not give offence to anybody. I have resented the statement that I have brought charges against shipowners, but we will not quarrel about words. I have made two distinct allegations—you may call them 'charges' if you think fit. The first allegation I have made is that there are black sheep in shipowning as well as in every other trade with which I am acquainted; and that it is the duty and the interest of all good shipowners to do all in their power to discountenance the proceedings of the less scrupulous members of their body. That is the only allegation I have made with respect to persons; but I have made another allegation to which I attach much greater importance. After all, though we are bound to legislate for exceptions, we should not be justified in touching the whole of these complicated interests, if it were only for the sake of legislating for exceptions. But I have brought a charge against the law—not against persons, but against a state of the law—and what I have said is, that any law which enables a man to make a profit out of the loss of his ship and the loss of his crew is a law contrary to sound policy. I say that, as long as human nature is what it is, one of the most powerful motives to which we can appeal is the motive of self-interest; and I say that I desire to enlist this self-interest on the side of safety, instead of allowing it to operate, as it now does, in the opposite direction. . . . All experience shows that you cannot pretend to interfere in any way with any great trade or industry in the country with the full consent and approval of that trade itself. Let any one try now to deal with the licensing legislation, and see how far he will have the approval and benevolent support of the licensed victuallers. Let any one try to deal with the banking laws. Let us take our illustrations from the past. Let us consider what happened in the case of manufacturers when the Factory Acts were first proposed to

Parliament. I say it with great regret, having been a manufacturer myself, and being still proud to have belonged to that great class; but I am bound to say that very few manufacturers supported the application of the Factory Acts. They protested against them on the ground that they disturbed their trade; that it meant a transfer of their industry to other countries; and that they were wholly unnecessary laws. Now, however, it is admitted, with common consent, that they have been of the greatest possible advantage, not only to the women and children whom they were principally intended to protect, but to the manufacturers themselves, who derive advantage from everything that improves the condition of their workpeople. But these Acts were opposed by almost every manufacturer in the House. The same thing happened with regard to mines. The legislation for mines was strongly opposed by the mining interest. It will be in the recollection of the House how, in the present Parliament, the Employers' Liability Bill was opposed by honourable members, and especially by the late Mr. Knowles, who was universally respected in this House, and who was as honest as the day, and as transparent as possible; yet who came down here, believing every word he said, and declared that he and all his fellow-mineowners would be ruined if the Act were passed, and that foreign countries would reap enormous advantages. We all know that those doleful predictions have not been realised; that no one has been injured by the Act; and during the short time it has been in operation it has conferred great advantages upon those interested in it. But on that occasion the shipowners came down and voted against Mr. Knowles in favour of the application of the Employers' Liability Act to the mineowners. Now, I ask the shipowners to show good cause why the mineowners and manufacturers should not vote against them when I propose that equal laws should be applied to the sea service.

I say, then, that the shipowners will have to make out a very good case, and will have to show very good ground, against further interference with their trade. They will

have to show that the necessity is less than it is in other trades which have been constantly interfered with by Parliament. Well, is the necessity less? I will mention only one fact as having some bearing on what I am now saying. As soon as this Bill was introduced, in the very heat and fury of the storm raised at its introduction, there was held a great meeting of delegates of the shipping interest at the Cannon Street Hotel. All sorts of persons connected with shipping attended; there were present the picked men in the trade, selected because they were the best fitted to bear aloft the flag of this great profession, and to vindicate the character and honour of the trade they represented. They were certainly not in a very friendly or conciliatory mood towards myself upon that occasion; and I am afraid they did not make any practical suggestion I was able to utilise on a subsequent consideration of the subject. A full account of the meeting was given in the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, and I have taken from that paper the names of the delegates who attended. Of the 59 picked men present 49 were shipowners in their own names, others were shipowners not registered in their own names, and many held shares in shipping companies. Forty-nine, as I say, were registered in their own names. I have looked up the matter, and I find that in the last five years these 49 owners, who, it must be remembered, were picked men, have lost 65 ships and 367 lives; and that, of the 49, 9 alone have lost 36 ships and 177 lives. I beg the House to understand what my object is in bringing these facts forward. I am not going to found any accusation against these gentlemen. That is not the purpose of my argument. It may well be—I hope it is—I have no reason to doubt it—that every one of these casualties was such that no human skill or human foresight could possibly prevent it. They are all, perhaps—I dare say it is so—the act of God; but what I say is this—that the trade of which such statements can be made concerning the picked men in it, and in which a loss of life so terrible is an ordinary incident, is not a trade that can come here to assert its independence of

criticism, and to say that it will not assist in making the changes which are suggested in order to save life in future. . . .

I propose to show to the House that the loss of life at sea is excessive, and that it is increasing rather than diminishing. I propose to show, in the second place, that it is due to causes which are more or less preventable in their character. I propose, in the third place, to show that all impartial authorities agree that an increase of care and precaution would diminish these losses ; and, in the last place, I propose to show that the state of the law and the practice of the trade undoubtedly tend to relax ordinary motives for care, and afford a temptation to negligence. If I prove these propositions, I hope the House will not accept the responsibility of further delay, but will do something to improve and amend a law which I think, under the circumstances, will stand self-condemned. . . . There is terrible loss of life. The shipowners complain that I have taken a single year. Well, drop the single year, and take the whole past twelve years. What is the fact with regard to the whole of these twelve years ? It is this—that in that time 36,000 men suffered violent deaths ; and of the whole number one in six lost his life. No ; one in six of the average number employed in the whole twelve years, of every man, every boy, every officer, and every seaman, lost his life in the British Merchant Service. Go on, and carry that a step further. If you assume that the average working life of the seaman is twenty-four years, then you will find that one in every three will, in the course of his working life, perish by a violent and dreadful death. Many who go on a forlorn hope have a much better chance of existence than our British sailors. I hear a little murmuring behind. I hope there will be no misunderstanding. I am not at present drawing any conclusions from these facts, and certainly I am not basing upon them any charges. All I say of these figures, and I am sure I carry the House with me—shipowners as well as other members,—is that a trade with such incidents as these, it will be agreed, is not altogether in a healthy or satisfactory condition. It cannot be regarded

with equanimity, this tremendous loss of life, or be considered a necessary incident of any traffic. I may take an extreme view of this matter; but I ask myself sometimes whether we are justified in carrying on a trade if such a loss of life as this is inevitable in connection with it. We boast of our national prosperity, take pride in the development of our national wealth and national enterprise. These things, good as they are, may be bought too dear; and, in my opinion, they are bought too dear if they cannot be bought without a sacrifice of life such as I have described. . . .

Now, sir, I cannot help thinking there has been a little too much readiness in some quarters to accept this terrible and deplorable loss of life as an inevitable incident. I do not believe that it is an inevitable incident. It is impossible to say how many of those lives could have been saved; but what I can show the House clearly is, that those lives have been lost from causes which are in the nature of preventable causes. I do not mean by that that all of them could have been prevented; but they are in the nature of causes which might have been modified, according as greater or less precautions have been taken. . . . Well, now, do not let it be supposed for a moment that I endorse any charge, if any charge has ever been made against any shipowner, that he has deliberately sent his ship to sea that it might be lost, and that the sailors might be drowned, for the sake of gain. If such a man existed he would be a monster in human form; he would be guilty of murder, and hanging would be too good for him. I do not say there have not been people who have gone very close to it. I will quote one case—that of Berwick and Houldsworth. It was proved that these men had lost fifteen ships, one after another, in order to get the insurance, and they were brought up and convicted in the fifteenth case; one was sentenced to twenty years' and the other to fifteen years' penal servitude. In these cases, however, I believe, they so arranged matters that there should be very little, if any, loss of life. But that is not the charge. The charge is not that shipowners deliberately do anything of this kind. The statement made is this—that unless it is

distinctly their interest to take every precaution, even those which are doubtful, they will not take all the precautions which they ought to take; because it is an essential feature in this case, that you cannot say about any particular precaution that it will infallibly save life. Take the case of overloading, and suppose a vessel with a freeboard of 4 feet. No man in the world can say that if that vessel had a freeboard of 4 feet 1 inch she would be quite safe, but that with a freeboard of 3 feet 11 inches she was absolutely unsafe. But no one can deny that with 4 feet 1 inch she would be more safe than with 4 feet or with 3 feet 11 inches freeboard. All I want to do is to put on the shipowner every pressure I can, in common fairness and ordinary reasonableness, in order to induce him to take as many and as great precautions as he possibly can. And I am quite certain that when it is done the loss of life at sea will be very much less than it is at present. . . . I have said that we have endeavoured by legislation to fix criminal liability upon the owners. This has failed in practice, and no recent prosecution has succeeded. You are trying to fix criminal liability on a man who, after all, may not be guilty of a criminal offence. If you are going to prove a criminal offence, your proof must be overwhelming. It is not enough to have circumstantial evidence, however strong; you must have absolute proof of the man's intentions. You can show the most extraordinary culpable negligence. You can show that the ship was unseaworthy; that her equipment was disgraceful; and that she was overladen. All these things have been shown, over and over again. But you cannot always demonstrate that the owner was cognisant of these things, and that he deliberately allowed the ship to go to sea in that condition. If we prosecute the owner, and bring him before the court, we are then asked—'Why did not the Board of Trade stop the ship? It must have been because they thought her seaworthy.' And the court refuses to convict. If, on the other hand, we do stop the ship, then it is said that the criminal act was not complete, and that, perhaps, at the last moment, the ship would not have been sent to sea at

all; and thus, in one way or another, these prosecutions break down. And it is not to be wondered at. Here is a case illustrative of the difficulties we have to contend with—the case of a vessel which foundered in 1881, with twenty-seven men on board, and which the court found was overladen. She was insured for £16,000 at the rate of £15 per ton, which was altogether beyond the value. The vessel was twenty years old, and the assessors advised the court that a first-rate new vessel could have been bought for the same money. The court thought so strongly with regard to this case that, in order to mark its sense of the conduct of the owners, it charged them with the cost of making the inquiry. But punishment of that kind must necessarily be a very inadequate one, supposing the owners to have been guilty of so serious an offence. I had the strongest legal opinion that it would have been useless to prosecute, as the overloading took place at Odessa, and the owner was not there at the time, and that, consequently, it would be impossible to fix responsibility on him. It would be impossible to say what amount of knowledge he possessed with regard to the matter. But I do not think we shall ever be able to rely upon the shipowner, until we make it impossible for him to make a profit out of his loss.

My object is to make it to the personal interest of every shipowner, who has a larger knowledge of all the facts and a greater power than any one else, to take every possible precaution, and give the turn of the scales always in favour of safety, and to hesitate to incur a risk which otherwise he might be inclined to venture upon. . . . It is said by the shipowners—'All you say is very true as to this matter of the law. It is bad law; it is a law which ought to be amended; but do not think you will gain much by it, because although, under the law, it is possible to over-insure, as a matter of fact a shipowner does not do so, and it is so rare that you will find little advantage in stopping it.' But is it rare? I have said that when the time came I would give the House overwhelming proof that it is not rare, but is the commonest thing in the world; and now I am about to keep my promise.

In the first place, let me take a singular fact—a curious thing that occurred only the other day. The last striking loss which has occurred is the loss of the *State of Florida*, belonging to a great line of steamships against which I have nothing to say. When the news came to this country that that ship was lost, the shares of that line went up immediately on the Glasgow Exchange. That, I think, is a singular fact. At the end of April these shares, or parts of these shares—I am not sure whether they are quoted whole or in part—were quoted at 72s. 6d. The news of the loss came to this country on the 7th or 8th, and in the course of the next few days these shares touched 90s. Since then they have gone down again, and the last quotation I have had is 77s. 6d. I have asked for an explanation, and the explanation given me is this—that subsequent news showed that the loss was due to a collision; and when that became known on the Exchange, it was thought possible that some liability might rise against the company, and accordingly speculation in the shares took a different direction. At all events, this is true—that the people who knew most about the matter—the dealers in stocks on the Glasgow Exchange, buyers and sellers, and otherwise—thought, whether they were right or wrong, that the loss of this ship was going to be a gain to her owners. The court found that she was too deeply laden. Her gross freight was insured. The owner was examined as to how he came to insure her at £14,500, and he admitted that he had added 10 per cent. to cost, that being, he said, a usual mercantile transaction. Then we have another case—that of the *Emily*. That was a most unfortunate vessel—or perhaps I ought to say she belonged to a most fortunate owner. Her owner, when he was examined, could not say how often she had been stranded, though he admitted that she had been stranded twice in the preceding year, and that, on one occasion, he had received £4500 for one of these strandings. She was a vessel of 787 tons burden and was worth, according to the assessors, about £10 a ton, which would make her worth altogether about £8000. She was valued by Bayley and Ridley at £9000, but she was

insured for £14,000. She was stranded. Fortunately no lives were lost; but the owner made, as far as I can make out, from £5000 to £6000 on the loss of his vessel, besides £200 on freight. . . . But the worst cases are those of what are called 'single ship companies,' which have sprung into existence only during the last few years. Originally established by a most respectable firm in Liverpool, for a very reasonable purpose, and found advantageous for speculation, they have since been established by other persons, who had much better have had nothing whatever to do with them. What happens is that a man who calls himself managing owner, and who is in some cases merely a financial speculator, starts the single ship company. In some cases these managing owners are broken-down tradesmen, linen-drapers' assistants, waiters, or other people in similar walks of life. These people make a contract for a ship, and then they spread broadcast throughout the country their prospectuses promising 20, 30, and even 40 per cent. dividend, and assuring everybody that under no conceivable circumstances can there be any risk, inasmuch as if the vessel is lost they will recover her full value by insurance; and in this way there has been a tremendous development of shipping speculation throughout the country, and to a large extent among classes who ought to have had nothing whatever to do with such matters—women, Dissenting ministers, working people, especially in Yorkshire and Lancashire, have been tempted to invest their money in these companies, with which they ought to have had no connection whatever. These are the people who have made the progress of this Bill so difficult. They are the people who have flooded the House of Commons with letters complaining of the losses which the Bill will compel them to sustain. The managing owners have sent out their circulars, full of the most extravagant misrepresentations as to the object of the Bill and the intention of the Government, and declaring that these people who have invested their money will be absolutely ruined if the members of this House do not stop the Bill—and these poor people, who are merely dupes, and who are not

to be blamed, except for want of care in making their investments, have sent letters to members all over the place, and urged them on no account to allow the Bill to proceed. . . . There can be no doubt—and I do not attempt to deny it for a moment—that legislation may cause inconvenience, but no greater inconvenience and no greater sacrifices than the respectable members of the trade may reasonably and fairly be called upon to bear. Our legislation, the other day, against dynamite, no doubt, put the manufacturers of dynamite to great inconvenience; and, possibly, if they had had the power they would have protested against and prevented that legislation. In regard to this matter of over-insurance, I point it out to the House as a dangerous practice, and I say that you ought to put a stop to it, even though the change may cause some inconvenience. . . . Let me once more state the question raised by this Bill. The question really is, whether a man ought to be able to contract himself out of all liability, and, at the same time, make a profit by the loss of his ship and the loss of lives? I say he ought not. I say that that is a thing which no honourable man would claim to do, and which no other man ought to be allowed to do. I think the importance of this matter cannot be overestimated. Three thousand lives every year are hurried to a premature death. That is in itself a tremendous fact; and inseparably connected with this loss of life, there is also an enormous loss of property, a loss which has been estimated at from £10,000,000 to £20,000,000 sterling a year. When we were discussing bankruptcy legislation last year, it was said that there were £20,000,000 of bad debts made in the country, and that was thought a thing worthy of the most serious consideration of the House; but I would point out that that was not a loss to the country. It is only a transfer from one pocket to another—what the creditor lost the debtor gained. But in the case of losses connected with shipping such is not the case. Every penny goes to the bottom of the sea, and is taken from the available wealth and the productive capital of the country. I have shown that these losses are due to causes which may be prevented—which in their

nature are preventable. I have shown that every impartial authority agrees that many of these losses could be prevented. I have shown that the law is a direct incentive to negligence; and I have shown, lastly, that these facts have been recognised by successive Governments, even so early as 1875, when Lord Norton, then Sir Charles Adderley, President of the Board of Trade, declared that the time had come when the matter should be fully dealt with. I do implore the House to do something to remove what I believe to be a great scandal in our legislation and a great slur upon an honourable industry, of which, in all other respects, we have every reason to be proud.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RANSOM

### BIRMINGHAM, JANUARY 5, 1885

[Saving perhaps certain speeches delivered in the course of the later and famous unauthorised programme campaign, in the autumn of 1885, the following was for long the best remembered of all Mr. Chamberlain's public utterances. It is known as his doctrine of ransom, and caused at the time a considerable stir throughout the country and some dissension and embarrassment among colleagues, generally so averse from any form of Socialism as were the other members of Mr. Gladstone's ministry. Mr. Chamberlain's proposed *agenda* for the new Parliament elected under the new Franchise Act was, in fact, a temperate application of his doctrine. The Conservative ministries were one day to make little of it. But the doctrine was startling at the time. Returning to the charge on January 14, 'I asked the other day,' he said, 'what ransom will property pay for the "natural" rights which now ceased to be recognised? I put the question now in a different form. What insurance will wealth find it to its advantage to provide against the risks to which it is undoubtedly subject.' 'Natural rights' was, of course, a 'howler,' an inference drawn from a hypothesis entirely unwarranted, and accepted by Mr. Chamberlain as by others of his generation who were 'not aware that it is but the linguistic survival of an exploded theory.' See pp. 36-38 of the lamented Mr. S. H. Jeyes's admirable monograph (Bliss, Sands, and Foster, 1896) for some sympathetic and acute remarks on this point.]

I HAVE been your member now for nearly nine years, and during the greater part of that time I have had the honour of a seat in the Government. I have had to make great claims upon your patience and indulgence, and you have never failed to respond with a generosity which is one of the

most striking characteristics of great popular constituencies. In the course of that time you will easily understand I have sometimes found it difficult, as one of the Radical members in a Liberal Government, to reconcile the loyalty which I owe to my colleagues and to the party at large with the strenuous and constant promotion of the principles which I am supposed especially to represent. I have had at times to reserve and sometimes even to sacrifice my opinion ; perhaps I may have disappointed my constituents ; but it has been in my opinion necessary, in order not to bring about a division which might injure our common cause, or which might embarrass the leader whose unsurpassed ability and long-tried devotion to the people's service have earned for him their undying regard and esteem. And now, gentlemen, I accept your reception as the proof that, in your opinion at all events, I have been faithful to the trust you have reposed in me, and that I have retained the friendship and support without which public life would indeed be an intolerable burden. I rejoice the more in this expression of your continued goodwill to me, because we stand to-night at the commencement of a new era. We are about to take a new departure, and I rejoice to think that we shall take it together. . . . The Franchise Bill has been passed, and the pistol of which Lord Salisbury spoke so emphatically has been loaded, and it is in our hands. Next year two millions of men will enter for the first time into the full enjoyment of their political rights. These men are for the most part your fellow-workmen in factory and in field, and for the first time the toilers and spinners will have a majority of votes, and the control, if they desire it, of the Government of the country. To-day Parliament is elected by three millions of electors, of whom, perhaps, one-third are of the working classes. Next year a new House will come to Westminster elected by five millions of men, of whom three-fifths belong to the labouring population. It is a revolution which has been peacefully and silently accomplished. The centre of power has been shifted, and the old order is giving place to the new. . . . If these are the results which we have the right to anticipate, I do not think

we need waste time in discussing to whom the merits of authorship belong. Whether it be Lord Salisbury or Mr. Schnadhorst, whether it be Mr. Gladstone or Sir Stafford Northcote, we will accept them thankfully from whichever hands they come, and with a profound belief in the probability of future benefits to follow in their train. You are in the position of men who have suddenly come into a fortune of which a short time ago you had only a distant expectation. Almost immediately you will be placed in the full enjoyment of those political rights of which up to this time you have only had a trifling foretaste.

These changed conditions will require novel combinations to meet them. The Liberal party next January will have outgrown its old clothes, and it must be prepared with new garments. The organisation of the party and the programme of the party must be alike enlarged to meet the necessities of the situation which will have been created. I see that in some quarters the Tories are consoling themselves for the changes which they fear, in the hope that, at all events, they will put an end to the power and the influence of the dreaded caucus. They never were more mistaken in their lives. The caucus is like the fabled hydra ; you may strike off its head and half a dozen new ones spring from the dismembered trunk. There will be more need than ever for organisation if you are to gain the full advantage from the new conditions. Vested interests, special crotchets, and personal claims have a natural tendency to combine. They are on their defence ; they are bound together by common ties and by common fears ; and if the public good, if the interest of the great majority is without discipline and without recognised leaders, it will be like a mob that disperses before the steady tread of a few policemen, or before the charge of a handful of cavalry. I want to impress upon you that our free, open, representative Liberal associations are the essential conditions of success in the future, as they have mainly contributed to our success in the past ; but although the principle remains, the form may very likely have to be changed. In the big towns we have two objects

in view. In the first place, I hope I express your opinion when I say that we all desire that the unity of the constituencies should be preserved; that the initiative and the momentum which have been the prerogatives of these great communities should be continued. We should all be sorry if the places which have been occupied with so much honour by Manchester and Leeds and Birmingham and other large towns should in the future be empty, if those potent voices should be silenced, and if all the traditions of the past and their bright examples should be so much ancient history, carrying no practical lesson for the future. But, on the other hand, in our reverence for the past, do not let us omit to salute the rising stars, the new constituencies into which our boroughs are to be divided. They should be encouraged and invited and stimulated to discharge with honour and dignity the responsibilities to which they are called. What the exact form and details of the new organisations should be may well be left to the constituencies themselves. It seems to me, however, that it will almost be a necessity of future union and future success that in each of these districts there should be created a numerous, a powerful, a representative district council of the Liberal Association, and that to this district council should be wholly left the duty of selecting the candidates for each of the localities. But then these district councils might unite to form the United Liberal Association of Birmingham, which would be no longer an Eight Hundred, it would be more likely a Two Thousand, and would alone have the power of collecting and expressing the opinion of the whole town. So under this system you would have the federated association defining and formulating the policy and the programme of the Liberal party as a whole, while the district councils without interference, control, or dictation from any other body whatsoever, would elect their spokesmen and representatives to carry out this policy in Parliament, in the School Board, and in the Town Council. But when your organisation is perfected, when in due proportion to their numbers every class and every district sends up its member to the great council of the nation

which for the first time will be truly representative, what will this assembly do with the powers entrusted to it? What effect will the change we have been considering have upon the future policy of the country? What will be the direction of the new legislation in which we shall all be engaged? I hope to have at some future time an opportunity of dealing more in detail than I can do to-night with the programme of the Liberal party; but there are two important branches of the subject on which, with your permission, I wish to make a few general observations. In the first place, I think that, on the whole, the extension of popular authority will make for peace. The late Mr. Carlyle, in one of his books, says that the common people everywhere desire war, because in war time there is a demand for common people to be shot. I do not believe in the truth of this cynical observation. I do not think that the democracy will have any love for a policy of intervention and aggression, nor any ambition for conquest and universal dominion. These things lead straight to conscription, and you will not be eager or even willing to pay the blood tax which is levied on your brethren in continental countries. I anticipate, then, that you will give no assistance to the party who are clamouring for what they call a strong foreign policy, and who at this moment, in the interest chiefly of the bondholders and financial speculators, are calling upon us to take possession of Egypt without regard to the wishes of the population or the just susceptibilities of other nations. We are in Egypt at this time in pursuance of an unselfish object. Our task has proved of greater magnitude than we had anticipated. It is one, indeed, of almost unexampled difficulty. We have met with hostility and opposition in quarters where we had reason to hope for assistance and co-operation. But we will not be driven from our intentions. We will not yield one jot either to the perfidious suggestion of dubious friends abroad or to the interested clamour of financial greed at home, and we will not destroy the independence which we are solemnly pledged to Europe and to Parliament to respect. I hope and believe that in this course we shall have

your approval, and that you will know how to distinguish between a policy of justice and a policy of weakness. It is not the bravest man who blusters most, and the universal bully at a time of pinch is very likely to be found a universal coward. If, however, the occasion should come to assert the authority of England, a democratic Government, resting on the confidence and support of the whole nation, and not on the favour of any limited class, would be very strong. It would know how to make itself respected, and how to maintain the obligations and the honour of the country. I think foreign rulers would be very ill advised if they were to assume that, because we are anxious to avoid all cause of quarrel with our neighbours, we are wanting in the old spirit of Englishmen, or that we should be found very tolerant of insult or long suffering under injury. But then I hope that the consciousness of strength will bring with it the calmness and the confidence which are the characteristics of a sense of power and the possession of true courage. The suspicion, irritation, and nervousness which seem to characterise a certain school of politicians among us are, to my mind, altogether inconsistent with the dignity of a great nation, whose resolution never to suffer wrong should make it slow either to give or to take offence. If we are to be thrown into an agony of apprehension every time another nation shows signs of restlessness, our power of effective intervention will be lessened when there is real occasion to put it forth.

It would be humiliating, indeed, if England, the mistress of half the world, were to be driven to imitate the conduct of an angry scold, and indulge in a fit of hysterical passion because Germany had snapped up some unconsidered trifle of territory which we have hitherto not thought it worth while to acquire. If it be necessary, as I think it may be, to review our foreign and colonial policy in the light of recent events, let us face the altered circumstances of the problem in the spirit of full grown men, and not with the pettish outcry of frightened children. I regret the action, however natural it may seem on some grounds, which the German Government has thought it necessary to take. I see it

stated that Prince Bismarck, the veteran statesman, whose great ability, high courage, and force of character have given him an extraordinary position in European politics, has been influenced in his recent acquisitions[1] by a personal dislike to Mr. Gladstone, and a desire to embarrass his Government. I do not believe it. Prince Bismarck is much too large-minded a man to allow a private prejudice to affect his great designs, and he is much too wise to affront a friendly nation in the person of its chief in order to gratify a feeling of momentary irritation. I have no doubt he has very different and much more worthy motives for the policy he has pursued. But none the less on that account am I sorry that he should have thought it his duty to take a course which has already created widespread feelings of uneasiness, and which has produced feelings of the deepest irritation and alarm in those dependencies of the Crown whose prosperity and welfare are viewed with the liveliest satisfaction by every Englishman. It does not need a prophet to predict that in the course of the next half-century the Australian Colonies will have attained such a position that no Power will be strong enough to ignore them, and that they will have a supreme authority in the Pacific seas; and, for my part, I cannot look with any confidence on any settlement which may be made in those regions in defiance of their united opposition. Meanwhile we are not unmindful of our obligations. If foreign nations are determined to pursue distant colonial enterprises, we have no right to prevent them. We cannot anticipate them in every case by proclaiming a universal protectorate in every unoccupied portion of the globe's surface which English enterprise has hitherto neglected. But our fellow-subjects may rest assured that their liberties, their rights, and their interests are as dear to us as our own; and if ever they are seriously menaced the whole power of the country will be exerted for their defence, and the English democracy will stand shoulder to shoulder throughout the world to maintain the honour and the integrity of the Empire.

[1] *i.e.* in New Guinea.

Now, gentlemen, I turn to the last point upon which I propose to address you. What is to be the nature of the domestic legislation of the future? I cannot help thinking that it will be more directed to what are called social subjects than has hitherto been the case. How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people, how to increase their enjoyment of life, that is the problem of the future; and just as there are politicians who would occupy all the world and leave nothing for the ambition of anybody else, so we have their counterpart at home in the men who, having already annexed everything that is worth having, expect everybody else to be content with the crumbs that fall from their table. If you will go back to the early history of our social system, you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with natural rights, with a right to a share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all those rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them; some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance; some have been destroyed by fraud; and some have been acquired by violence. Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages, it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom, that it might be very difficult and perhaps impossible to reverse it. But then I ask, what ransom will property pay for the security which it enjoys! What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognised? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of those of its members who would make very short work of private ownership if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action.

There is a doctrine in many men's mouths and in few men's

practice that property has obligations as well as rights. I think in the future we shall hear a great deal more about the obligations of property, and we shall not hear quite so much about its rights. What are the rights of property? Is it a right of property which permits a foreign speculator to come to this country and lay waste two hundred miles of territory in Scotland for the gratification of his love of sport, and to chase from the lands which their fathers tilled long before this intruder was ever heard of, the wretched peasants who have committed the crime of keeping a pet lamb within the sacred precincts of a deer forest? Are the game laws a right of property? Is it just and expedient that the amusements of the rich, carried even to barbarous excess, should be protected by an anomalous and Draconian code of law, and that the community should be called upon to maintain in gaol men who are made criminal by this legislation, although they have committed no moral offence? Is it a right of property that sailors should be sent to sea to pursue their dangerous occupation without any sufficient regard to their security? Is it tolerable that in pursuit of a necessary livelihood for themselves and their families they should embark in ships whose safe return depends wholly on the continuance of favourable weather, and upon the absence of any of the ordinary accidents of the sea? Is it right that they should do this while the owners of these ships and the employers of these men sleep comfortably in their beds, with a certainty that whatever happens they will be no losers—that they will probably be gainers—by the disasters which cause so much misery to the seamen and to their families? Lastly, is it an essential condition of private ownership in land that the agricultural labourers in this country, alone of civilised countries, should be entirely divorced from the soil they till, that they should be driven into towns to compete with you for work, and to lower the rate of wages, and that, alike in town and in country, the labouring population should be huddled into dwellings unfit for man or beast, where the conditions of common decency are impossible, and where they lead directly to disease, intemperance, and crime?

These are questions which I hope you will ask at the next election, and to which you will demand an answer. Do not suffer yourselves to be turned aside; do not be diverted. The owners of property—those who are interested in the existing state of things, the men who have privileges to maintain—would be glad to entrap you from the right path by raising the cry of fair trade, under which they cover their demand for Protection, and in connection with which they would tax the food of the people in order to raise the rents of the landlord. Protection very likely might, it probably would have this result—it would increase the incomes of the owners of great estates, and it would swell the profits of the capitalists who were fortunate enough to engage in the best protected industries. But it would lessen the total production of the country, it would diminish the rate of wages, and it would raise the prices of every necessary of life. Believe me, it is not in this direction that you have to look for remedy for the depression which undoubtedly prevails. Property cannot pay its debt to labour by taxing its means of subsistence. You must look for the cure in legislation laying the heaviest burdens on the shoulders best able to bear them—legislation which will, in some degree, at any rate, replace the labourer on the soil and find employment for him without forcing him into competition with the artisans of the towns—legislation which will give a free education to every child in the land, and which will thus enable every one, even the poorest, to make the best use of the faculties with which he may be gifted. I congratulate you on the fair prospect which is opening up for the class to which you belong. In the era which is now commencing we shall see many experiments intended to lessen the evils which poverty brings in its train, to increase the rewards of labour, to bring hope to the miserable, to give courage to the weak, and in this way to advance the aim and end of all our Liberal policy—the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

## AGRICULTURAL LABOUR AND LAND REFORM

IPSWICH, JANUARY 14, 1885

[In the following speech, Mr. Chamberlain, before an audience largely agricultural. re-stated that doctrine of ransom which he had so recently expounded—Jan. 5—at Birmingham before a meeting of working-men. For this quotation from Montesquieu—*De l'esprit des lois*—the editor is obliged to Mr. Austen Chamberlain: *Les revenus de l'Etat sont une portion que chaque citoyen donne de son bien pour avoir la sûreté de l'autre.* 'That,' said Mr. Chamberlain, on hearing his son read out the passage, 'is my doctrine of ransom.']

YOU will agree with me that circumstances look hopeful for the Liberal cause. The recent settlement, at all events, has fulfilled our most sanguine expectations. . . . For good or for evil, democracy has established itself in the seat of authority, and the government of the many will be substituted for the government of the few. It is natural that we should speculate on the effect of this tremendous change; that we should consider its results both on the fortunes of the Liberal party and on the legislation of the future.

There are two points to which I should like to direct attention. The first is the great increase in the power of the large towns, including London, and the second the appearance on the scene of a new political factor in the shape of the agricultural labourer. The great towns have had a powerful influence on the legislation of the past. Although inadequately represented, they have done much to mould the policy of the country and to supply the force which was absolutely necessary to overcome the passive resistance of class interests to every Liberal programme. That pressure in the future will be increased in proportion to the addition made to the political representation of these highly organised and populous communities, and I think that the enfranchisement of the labourer will tend in the same direction. I do not feel inclined to speak very dogmatically upon such a subject. The labourer is a sealed book even to those who live in his midst, but it does not appear to me that his lot is

so happy that he is likely to be contented with it without trying for some improvement. The agricultural labourer is the most pathetic figure in our whole social system. He is condemned by apparently inexorable conditions to a life of unremitting and hopeless toil, with the prospect of the poor-house as its only or probable termination. For generations he has been oppressed, ignored, defrauded, and now he will have to be reckoned with. The inarticulate voice will find expression, and we shall learn from his own lips, or from those of his representatives, what are his wants, and how he thinks to supply them. I have read somewhere of an incident on board a great passenger steamer. When the vessel was a few days out a man came to the captain and said, 'Captain, I want a berth.' 'Why,' said the captain, 'want a berth now? Where have you been all this time?' 'Oh,' said the man, 'I have been lying on a sick man, but he will not stand it any longer. He is getting well, and I have got to find another place.' The squire and the farmer, and sometimes the parson, have all been lying on the agricultural labourer; but he is getting well, and they will have to find some new position.

I think it follows from these considerations that the programme of the Liberal party will have to be enlarged. The old shibboleths will be found insufficient for the altered circumstances of the case, and it will be no good to rattle the dry bones of past political controversies. The other day I was speaking to a meeting of my own constituents, consisting entirely of working-men, and I ventured to indicate broadly and in general terms what seem to me to be the lines upon which our future legislation should proceed. That speech has been the subject of a good deal of comment, not all of it of the most friendly character. I find that about one-half of my opponents complain that what I said was mere empty platitude signifying nothing, while others denounce me for having made a direct attack upon the sacred rights of property and for having incited the poor to confiscation. I do not myself think that I am open to either of these charges. To-night... I hope that I may be able to show that the interests

of rich and poor are not hostile interests, but that, in pressing as I do for a more practical acknowledgment of the duties of property, I am putting the rights of property on the only firm and defensible basis. I believe that the danger to property lies in its abuse, and that the interest of the rich will be found to consist in a generous interpretation of their obligations and in the full and free acknowledgment of the rights of the poor. Because, after all, in spite of what political economists tell us, the poor have rights which cannot be safely ignored. . . . In the earlier stages of society these rights were fully recognised. They are still recognised in many countries. Land used to be held in common. Every man who was born into a community had his apportioned share in the great natural inheritance of the race, and if he was willing to work his livelihood was assured. Now all that has changed. The birthright of the English people has been bartered away for a mess of pottage, and it has become the possession of private owners of property. I asked the other day what ransom will property pay for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognised. I will put the same question now in a different form. What insurance will wealth find it to its advantage to provide against the risks to which it is undoubtedly subject? If the rich want their rights to be respected as they ought to be, they are bound in turn to respect the rights of their less fortunate brethren. It is said these views lead straight to communism, and that communism is a very terrible thing. Let us understand each other. I for one have never thought it possible or expedient to bring everything down to one dead level. I have never supposed you could equalise the capacities and conditions of men. The idler, the drunkard, the criminal, and the fool must bear the brunt of their defects. The strong man and the able man will always be first in the race. But what I say is that the community as a whole, co-operating for the benefit of all, may do something to add to the sum of human happiness, may do something to make the life of all its citizens, and, above all, the poorest of them, somewhat better, somewhat nobler, somewhat happier.

If I were to stop here it would be said, 'This is all very vague, and we should like to test your principles by their application.' On the other hand, I have no pretension to dictate the policy of the Liberal party. All I am anxious about is that Liberals generally should give these subjects careful consideration, and should consider them a matter worthy of immediate discussion. I will not lay down any absolute platform, but I will try to indicate the nature of the discussion which I think may be with advantage pursued. I think that we shall have to give a good deal more attention to what is called social legislation. We have a good deal to guide us, and much experience in that direction. Social legislation is not new. The Poor Law, for instance, is social legislation. It recognises that right to live which in some quarters is now denied, and in itself is an endeavour on the part of a community to save themselves from the shame and the disgrace of allowing any of its members to starve. There are many people who propose to carry it further. We shall hear in these times of depression, I imagine, a good deal about State-aided emigration. For my own part, I do not look on this proposal with much favour. I hope it may be possible to find work and employment for our artisans at home without expatriating them against their will. The Education Act is a second instance of social legislation, and one of the most beneficent and useful. It is an endeavour to put in the hands of all an instrument whereby alone advance in life has become possible. But we have not gone far enough. We have made education compulsory, but we have omitted to make it free. And I hope that this great and necessary change will be one of the first matters to which reformers will direct their attention. On what ground do we now levy a fee? Education is given, because it is of advantage to the child, and because it is of advantage to the community, and the community ought to pay for it, and not the individual. We force a parent to give up the labour of his child at a time, perhaps, when it is almost necessary to the subsistence of the family. We ought not to go further and impose upon him a tax which is unfair, a tax propor-

tioned not according to the ability of the parent to pay, but according to his necessities and wants. I cannot doubt that the example in this respect which has been set in the United States, in France, and almost throughout the Continent, will soon be imitated in our own country also.

I pass on to consider another very important branch of social legislation in connection with the work of local government. The resources of our corporations, and of local authorities generally, are largely used to obtain for the community advantages which they could never obtain for themselves. This is not eleemosynary legislation; it is really wise and beneficent co-operation. You have baths and wash-houses, free libraries, and museums, and even hospitals, established by many of our great corporations for the purpose of making life more comfortable and more enjoyable to those for whom they are provided. We desire that this co-operation should be greatly extended. Probably the first work of the reformed Parliament will be the extension of local government to the counties. If the present Government should be in office a measure for this purpose will no doubt be entrusted to my friend Sir Charles Dilke, and his name is a sufficient guarantee that it will be of a Radical and frankly democratic character. I see that, speaking at North Kensington last night, Sir Charles Dilke said that local government was a means to an end. I should be inclined to say that in some cases it is the end itself. It is the best political education for the people, because it affords to every man who has willingness and ability an opportunity of serving those among whom he lives, and enables him to gratify a worthy and honourable ambition. It touches the domestic life of the people, their health, comfort, and happiness, more closely, and to a greater extent than many of the most ambitious efforts of Imperial legislation. Under these circumstances, therefore, I hope we shall all be prepared to sustain its importance and dignity, and that we shall not be afraid to enlarge the scope of duties which have been so well performed. What are the two greatest and most pressing needs of our time? I think most

men would say the provision of healthy, decent dwellings in our large towns at fair rents, and in the country facilities for the labourer to obtain a small plot of land which he may be able to work. I believe that both these objects can be attained through the intervention of the local authorities, and I would accordingly give to them the power to acquire any land which it may be necessary for them to take, in order to carry out those objects, or for any other public purpose. I would further enable them to acquire it at its fair value, which I define to be the price which a willing purchaser would pay to a willing seller in the open market. Surely that is not an unfair proposition. Surely it is not too much to ask of the owners of land that they should hold their property subject, at all events, to the absolute necessities of the community, and that they should give up the chance of occasionally making an exorbitant profit whenever any portion of their property is required for any public service. I should also propose to give to local authorities a very wide discretion in carrying out the objects to which I have already referred. I would not tie them down by too stringent rules. I would not attempt to obtain an absolute uniformity of method. It would be better that there should be many experiments tried, and even if some of them should fail, others would probably succeed.

But if we are going to increase the work of the local authorities and to increase their expenditure, who is to pay for it all? I confess that I am not satisfied that the incidence of local taxation is fair. I have great sympathy with the farmers in the country and with the shopkeepers, and especially the small shopkeepers in the towns, upon whom rates press with considerable severity, and I do not understand why the whole burden of local taxation should rest upon the occupiers alone, and upon them in proportion only to their rateable value. The rateable value may not, and very often does not, bear the slightest proportion to the means of the man who is rated. A very rich man may choose to live in a very small house. Why should he escape paying, not according to his house, but according to the

interest he has in the prosperity of the country? It seems to me that the practice which prevails in the United States and most continental countries of taxing in some shape or other all property for local purposes, personal as well as real, is one which deserves the fullest consideration. I would ask again, Why should the owners of ground rents escape all contribution to the expenditure of their localities? These ground rents have all grown out of the prosperity and industry of the community. The property of the owners has been improved by local expenditure, and why should not the owners contribute towards the local expenditure of which they ought to bear a part.

I would not confine my revision of taxation to local rates. There are many anomalies in our Imperial taxation. I have never found, for instance, any one to defend the tobacco duty, which imposes a tax of 1400 per cent. upon the very poorest kind of tobacco, and which lets off the highest priced cigars with 5 or 10 per cent. Then there is the income tax. Is it really certain that the precarious income of a struggling professional man ought to pay in the same proportion as the income of a man who derives it from invested securities? Is it altogether such an unfair thing that we should, as in the United States, tax all incomes according to their amount? Prince Bismarck is a man who is not afraid of Socialist legislation; at the same time he cannot be accused of revolutionary designs. I observe that Prince Bismarck some time ago proposed to the Reichstag an income tax to be graduated according to the amount of the income, and to vary according to the character of the income. We already have done something in that direction in exempting the very smallest incomes from taxation. But I submit it is well worthy of careful consideration whether the principle should not be carried a little further. . . .

But I want to pass on to consider another and a still greater question than that of taxation. The question of land reform is really urgent at the present time. I take it for granted that all Liberals would be willing to complete the programme of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, and that they

would be willing to have what is called free trade in land. They would do away entirely with, or very considerably limit, the right of making settlements. They would do away with the system of primogeniture in cases of intestacy, and they would cheapen the transfer of land. I confess for my own part I think that when we have done all this there will still be a good deal more to do. If that is all we do, the land will remain, I do not say in the hands of the same people as now, but at all events in the hands of the same class of people. The rich will always win in competition with the poor, and the fact that the cost of land has been cheapened will only make it a better investment for the rich. Are we satisfied to go on without endeavouring to find a solution to this question? What are the present circumstances? I suppose that almost universally throughout England and Scotland farming has become a ruinous occupation. The capital of tenants has been very much reduced, or it has disappeared altogether. They are unable to stock their farms properly, and they are unable to find the money to pay the labourers to work them. I noticed the other day that in the last fifteen years the number of persons employed on the land has diminished by 800,000; and, of course, under these circumstances, production tends to fall off and the labourers crowd into the towns to enter into competition with you, to lower the rate of wages, and to huddle population together until anything like decent and healthful dwellings becomes impossible.

What is to be the remedy for this state of things? Mr. James Lowther and his friends propose that you should have recourse once more to protection. They suggested a short time ago that you might settle everything by a 5s. duty on corn. But I observe that when Mr. Lowther last addressed a public meeting he stated that he had come to the conclusion that 5s. would, perhaps, hardly be enough. He thought it might occasionally be raised to 10s., and then, in a parenthesis, he went on to say, 'or even sometimes 15s.'

It is a very curious thing that protection has this tendency to enlarge its demand. It is like quack medicine, the failure

of which is always attributed to the insufficiency of the dose. The farmers will be very foolish indeed if they follow Mr. Lowther after this Will o' the Wisp. If they study history at all they will find that the condition of the farmer was never so hopeless, and that the state of the labourer was never so abject as when corn was kept up at a high value by a prohibitive or protective duty, when it was 64s. or even rose to 102s. a quarter. Even in that time the evidence given before repeated committees of the House of Commons shows that the state of agriculture was deplorable. The food of the people was taxed to raise the rents of the landlord. None of the plunder found its way into the farmers' pockets, and I will tell them that unless they can secure absolute permanence of occupation, no artificial alteration in the price of wheat will help them one atom. It would appear that the Scotch farmers at all events, who are rather more shrewd than their English brethren, are alive to this fact. You know that the crofters—small tenants whose condition and whose sufferings deserve our sympathy and consideration—have been for some time past claiming the application of the Irish Land Act to their holdings, and I observe, not altogether without surprise, that some of the chief landowners are going to meet them with a view to agreeing to legislate on that basis. If they go as far as that they will not be able to stop. You cannot draw a line between the very smallest holdings and those which are just above them. Sooner or later, if you once let in the principle, it will be of universal application. I confess that for myself I do not regard that prospect with alarm. I am not afraid of the three 'F.'s' in England, Scotland, or Ireland. But the main obstacle seems to me to be in the farmers themselves. It consists, in the first place, in the way in which they play into the hands of their landlords and give them their support in propositions which would not be of the slightest advantage to the farmers themselves; and, in the second place, it is owing to the condition of existing tenancies. Most of our English farmers hold rather large farms. They have not sufficient capital, and they are dependent upon their land-

lords, sometimes as poor as themselves, for any improvements which it may be necessary to effect. As long as that is the case, fixity of tenure would not be of the slightest use to the farmer, who would find himself unable to fulfil the obligations which independence of his landlord would entail.

But there is another matter connected with the same branch of the subject. Many people no doubt think that the time has gone by when wheat will ever again be a profitable crop; but the best authorities are agreed that we import every year from £25,000,000 to £30,000,000 of produce, in the shape of butter, eggs, cheese, poultry, fruit, and vegetables which ought to be grown in this country. It is clear, however, that this kind of cultivation will only prosper when it is in the hands of small cultivators. The tenant or the owner of the land must look after the trade himself, or else he will have no chance of success. And so we come back to what, after all, is the most urgent and pressing need of all—that we shall, as far as may be, go back to the old system and re-establish the peasants and yeomen who were one of the most prosperous, the most independent, and the most comfortable of all classes in the community. I do not suppose that this can be done all at once. The old race has disappeared, and you cannot re-create it by a stroke of the pen. But I say we are bound to do all in our power to stimulate by legislation what is a matter of essential importance, if English agriculture is ever again to hold its own, and that is the reason why I look with so much interest to such legislation as that which is honourably connected with the name of my friend Mr. Collings—to the Allotments Act, which at all events does something to gratify the land hunger which exists in the breast of every labourer, and which will do something also to educate him to take in the long run a more independent position. . . .

I have said, I am not building a platform for the Liberal party. I am only anxious, in view of the altered condition of the political situation, that the Liberal party should be worthy of the trust and confidence which have been hitherto reposed in it by the people, and should show itself able to

sympathise with the aspirations of the masses, and ready to comply with their just and equitable demands. But I want to ask you whether there is any real cause for alarm in the suggestion that such matters as those to which I have referred should be fully discussed in the future ? There is not one of them for which I could not find authority and precedent. Many of them are not new. The other day I said at Birmingham that we ought to see that the burdens of taxation pressed most heavily upon the shoulders best able to bear them. I thought that was a self-evident statement, but I was told by several Conservative newspapers that it was a most dangerous and obnoxious doctrine. They did not know from whence it came. I obtained that doctrine from the works of a politician who was a considerable personage a good number of years ago, and who proposed a Committee to discover how far industry might be relieved of the burdens which property is more capacitated to bear. That is the same thing as my proposal, although in slightly different words, and it was made by Mr. Disraeli, who subsequently as Lord Beaconsfield became the type and model of Conservative statesmanship. There is not a single one of the changes of which I have spoken which is not paralleled in the legislation either of the United States, or of the Continent, or of some of those great dependencies where the English race have shown their capacity for self-government. And yet in those countries property is as secure and its enjoyment is just as real as it is at home. I am not sanguine enough to hope that we can, by any legislation which can be devised, remedy all the evils of humanity ; but that is no excuse for not trying to do something. I am confident in the power of a wise Government, resting on and representative of the whole people, to do something to add to the sum of human happiness, and to lessen the evils of misfortune and poverty. We are told that this country is the paradise of the rich ; it should be our task to see that it does not become the purgatory of the poor. It should be our task to strive, each according to his opportunity, to leave the world a little better than we found it.

## THE FRUITS OF THE FRANCHISE

BIRMINGHAM, JANUARY 29, 1885

[After the passing of Mr. Gladstone's Franchise Act, and under the Redistribution Bill referred to, Mr. Chamberlain was presently to become member for West Birmingham, instead of one member in the representation of the town at large. Hence the personal allusion. Payment of members, the abolition of plural voting, a revision of the existing system of taxation, the relief of Mr. Bradlaugh were the minor blessings which were to accrue under the wider system of franchise. The speech was described by Mr., now Sir H. W., Lucy as 'the Liberal Gospel of Good Tidings,' and was regarded in some quarters as very daring. The suggested land policy was the most serious point of the 'Gospel.' It foreshadowed the actual small holding legislation of Tory or Unionist Governments. The 'three acres' feature in Lord Tollemache's, the 'Tory' peer's, experiment is suggestive.]

SINCE I last had the honour of addressing my constituents a great change has come over the political situation. The Franchise Act has been passed, and we are within sight of a Seats Bill which will effect a more searching and a more equitable redistribution of political power than any of us had hoped to see in our time. This great change will not be brought about without some personal sacrifices. None will lose more than your representatives, who will cease to be entitled as of right to speak for the whole of this vast and powerful and intelligent community. It is not without sorrow, I am sure, that my colleagues and myself will find ourselves obliged to exchange a constituency which to us has always been so generous and so loyal for a smaller, although, I hope, an equally generous body. But our private loss is the public gain. We have, on the whole, every reason to be satisfied. The true creed of Liberalism is perfect faith and trust in the people, and with us the first condition of good government is that it shall be government by the people themselves. This is the end which, I think, will, at all events, be practically accomplished by the reforms which are in progress. I do not say that, in my opinion, they are perfect. I do not say that our representative

system will not be open to further amendment. But, at all events, next year, we shall for the first time have a full expression of the national will. For my own part, as you know, I have never concealed my preference for a wider suffrage than household franchise; and I cannot help thinking that the younger men among us, many of whom I see before me to-night, and who are the chief sufferers by the present limitation, would be worthy to take their place beside the new electors. They belong to every class in life, and I do not advocate their enfranchisement on party grounds, for I do not believe that it would materially alter the balance of power; but I think that these younger men, who have grown up under the great educational influences of the last fifteen years, would be at least as capable and at least as intelligent as those who are now called to the register. Well, it will come in time. You will have to wait a little longer. If it be found that the road along which we have already travelled be safe, we shall find plenty of people who are willing to go a little farther with us.

But in the meantime two other points are now urgent, which I hope will receive early consideration. I think there are many here who are interested in the question of the direct representation of labour. I will say for myself that I rejoice to think that under the altered conditions, opportunity will be found to give to Mr. Burt and Mr. Broadhurst who have represented the cause of labour with so much ability and so much independence in the present Parliament, colleagues who will follow their example, and who will strengthen their hands. I hear that my friend Mr. Courtney, who is travelling about the country on a missionary enterprise for proportional representation, has declared that, if his scheme were adopted, it would materially further this object. I must say I am rather surprised to find Mr. Courtney and the other prominent supporters of the proportional representation of minorities at all earnest on behalf of the direct representation of labour, for I never heard of their interest in the subject until they thought they could use it as an argument in favour of their scheme. But at any

rate, whether that interest is genuine or not, it is perfectly unnecessary that you should resort to a complicated scheme of voting to carry out this particular object at the present time. I will undertake to say that in the great majority of the new constituencies the working classes will be in a majority, and they will have the power to return one of their own order, if they find a fitting candidate. But the real difficulty lies in this—that you cannot find subsistence for men of the working classes if they are summoned to Westminster, and the only way to overcome the difficulty is to adopt the old constitutional system of payment of members. You pay the ministers of the Crown, and I cannot understand why members of Parliament should be the only people to work for nothing. If you paid them it is possible that they might do their work a little better. And I am not quite sure but that they would feel a higher responsibility to those who employ them. Well, it is said sometimes, 'Oh, but you will introduce the professional politician into England. Well, why not? The argument does not appear to me to be conclusive. Doctors, lawyers, manufacturers, working men, all have to learn their trade, and I should like to know why politics are the only business which may be left to amateurs. I should like to know why the great interests of the State should be committed to men who undertake to deal with them as a distraction and as a distinction, and who do not make it the serious business of their lives.

Then there is another question. I am in favour of the principle of 'one man, one vote,' and I object altogether to the plural representation of property. I will take my own case. I am a terrible example. I have three votes for as many borough constituencies, and I have three votes for as many county constituencies. That is to say I have six votes. I use them on the right side, but I know many of my friends who have ten or twelve, and I have heard of one reverend pluralist who has twenty-three. I consider this is an anomaly altogether inconsistent with the principle upon which we stand. That principle is that every householder, at all events, has an equal stake in the good govern-

ment of the country, and his life, his happiness, his property, all depend upon legislation which he is equally entitled with every one else to assist in framing. If we are to make a distinction, I am not quite certain whether it is not the poor man who ought to have more votes than the rich one. For, after all, his interests are more direct than the rich man's, and if you have bad legislation it may lessen the income of the one, but it may destroy altogether the means of subsistence of the other.

There is another question that I want to see settled, and that is the question of parliamentary oaths and the independence of the constituencies. I am not altogether without some expectation that even the present Parliament will settle this question, and may put beyond doubt the right of the electors in every place to exercise an unfettered choice. Mr. Bradlaugh has fought this great question with determination and resolution, and he has shown under much provocation a dignity and a moderation which his opponents would have done well to imitate. After all, he is not excluded because of his opinions—for unbelievers have sat in the House of Commons unquestioned at all times and down to the present day—but because of the sincerity and honesty with which he has expressed them. It is time that the contest was concluded, and the only way in which it can be terminated is by throwing the responsibility for opinion upon the individual and upon the constituency which selects him. The House of Commons will do well to admit that it exceeds its functions when it goes beyond the writ of election, and enters upon an inquiry into faith and doctrine and private opinion which is a matter of individual judgment.

Much lately has been said about certain proposals which I have made. These are not directed against any class or any individual. I have had two objects in view. In the first place I want to see that the burden of taxation is distributed according to the ability of the tax payer, and in the second place I want to increase the production of the land, and I want to multiply small owners and tenants. All this clamour about confiscation and blackmail and plunder is so

much dust raised by men who are interested in maintaining the present system, and who are either too prejudiced to read my proposals or too stupid to understand them. Let them keep their invective for some better occasion, for more apposite uses. If it be blackmail to propose that the rich should pay taxation in equal proportion to the poor, what word is strong enough to describe the present system, under which the poor pay more than the rich? If it be confiscation to suggest that land may be acquired at a fair value for public purposes, what language will fitly describe the operations of those who have wrongfully appropriated the common land, and have extended their boundaries at the expense of their poorer neighbours too weak and too ignorant to resist them? If it be plunder to require the restitution of this ill-gotten property, I should like to know what we are to say to those who perpetrated the original act of appropriation. The fact is, there are some people who have no conception of any property at all except the property of private owners like themselves; and the public purse, the public right, the public land, and public endowments are so many abstractions unworthy of care or of protection. If they are misappropriated or diverted to private uses, those people seem to think that the wrong is to be done without redress. Well, that is not my view. I hold that the sanctity of public property is greater even than that of private property, and that if it has been lost, or wasted, or stolen, some equivalent must be found for it, and some compensation may be fairly exacted from the wrongdoer.

Let us look a little more closely into this question of taxation. I remember reading, a good number of years ago, a speech which interested me very much. It was made before I was in Parliament by my friend Sir Charles Dilke. He said that a certain *minimum* of income necessary for subsistence ought not to be heavily taxed, and that the burden of taxation ought to fall on all over that. I entirely agree with him, and I know that he has not changed his opinion. I would add to that, that the more a man has over and above this necessary *minimum*, the more he may be fairly called

upon to pay for the protection and security which he enjoys. But what are the facts? I will undertake to say that an ordinary working man pays more at the present time in taxation, a larger portion of his income, than the greatest peer or the richest commoner in the land. Some years ago I was talking to a very intelligent Conservative member of Parliament, Mr. Phipps, who is member, I think, for one of the divisions of Northampton. He told me of a village in that county which consisted of 120 persons, all of whom obtained their supplies from a co-operative store in the village. He had the curiosity to take account of the total consumption and the taxation of the articles consumed by those people, and he found that the taxation payable on the articles they consumed amounted to 7½ per cent. of the total wages of the twenty-four families that formed the whole population of that village. I have been trying to make a contrast, and in order not to give offence to anybody else, I have taken my own case. I find it rather difficult to estimate exactly what I pay, because a good deal of the taxation is very skilfully hidden, and it is difficult to follow it out, but I have come to the conclusion that I certainly do not pay more than 6 per cent. of my total income, and I do not believe I pay as much. You see that I, who at all events by comparison with those poor people, am a rich man, who have got a good deal more than the *minimum* of subsistence, who am able to indulge in luxuries; who, as the Tories are constantly telling you, even wear a flower in my buttonhole—I, who have all these advantages, pay 1½ per cent. less than is extracted from the scanty earnings of those poor peasants in Northamptonshire, whose average earnings are only 16s. per week. I say that is unfair, and I say the sooner it is altered the better. If Parliament would only support the Chancellor of the Exchequer; if they would give him leave to equalise the duties payable on land and on personal property when those pass on death and by inheritance, and if, in addition, they would consent to impose a higher tax upon incomes exceeding a certain amount, I believe Mr. Childers would be able at once to remedy this injustice, and

to give you a free breakfast table to-morrow, and to enable you, perhaps, in addition, to double and treble the currants and the raisins that you put in your Christmas pudding.

But however important the question of the revision of taxation may be, it sinks into insignificance beside the question of the land. I suppose there are very few among us who would not be content to pay a good deal more taxation if our incomes only increased in proportion; and I do not believe there is any way of increasing the incomes of the majority of the population as long as our present ridiculous, exceptional, and unfair land system continues to exist. Now there is not a single authority who has written upon this subject, from Arthur Young in the last century down to Sir James Caird at the present day, who does not say that the land of this country, if it were properly cultivated, if there were sufficient labour and sufficient capital expended upon it, might produce a great deal more than at present. I remember Lord Derby saying the production of the land might be doubled. Supposing it were only increased one-half, that would mean about a hundred millions per annum. It would be an increase of the productive industries of this country that would be worth more to you even than all the trade of all the colonies combined, important and valuable as that undoubtedly is. But under the present system that increase is impossible. The present system has been described as a system under which the landlord and the farmer combine to take everything out of the land and put nothing in. It has broken down. Farmers have no capital; landlords declare they are penniless. Then the land must pass into other hands, and we must consider the advisability of creating and of preparing the way for a return to the old conditions, when English agriculture was prosperous and the Poor Law was unknown. The present system was devised with the object of creating and increasing large estates. Silently and for generations the process of absorption of small properties has gone on, and all the time there has been nothing working in the opposite direction. There has been no force tending to dispersion and subdivision. I

say that these forces we are bound to supply, and although I do not propose any very revolutionary or very violent change, I am convinced that we must contemplate a return to the old conditions and the re-establishment upon the land of the old class of yeomen who were at one time the most independent and the most prosperous class in the kingdom.

It is said, 'Oh, that is impossible; the present condition of things is the result of natural causes; natural causes have caused the extinction of the small owners and the migration of the labourers to the towns.' I do not think so. I cannot call it a natural cause when I find a system under which the labourer is content to work for ten or twelve hours a day for 10s. a week, and with no hope, no prospect for the termination of his career, except a death in the hospital or the poor house. If the life of the labourer were more tolerable, do you think that he would be so ready to fly from it? That has not been the experience of the past. That is not the experience of other countries. At the present time there is hardly a civilised country in the world in which legislation within comparatively recent times has not been devised to re-establish the small owners on the land. We may take some example even from our own country. In Wales the other day I was told that in spite of the depression which has prevailed there, as elsewhere, the small owners, of whom there are still a considerable number, had been able to fairly hold their own, and were much more prosperous on the whole than their neighbours who had large tenancies. Then, a gentleman wrote to me a short time ago, after having made a tour on foot through almost the whole of Ireland, that he found the condition of the tenants under the Land Act one of continually increasing improvement. In both these cases you have the magic of ownership and of security of occupation. But there is another experiment that I want to bring to your notice if you do not already know about it. I have not myself been able personally to examine into the facts, but they have been laid before me by several people who have given a great deal of attention to the subject. I refer to the experiment which is now being tried by a great Con-

servative landowner in Cheshire, Lord Tollemache, who is, I am told, a very bitter Tory. My right honourable friend (Mr. Bright) says I have been misinformed ; he is a Tory, but not bitter. After all I only used that adjective in order to follow it with an antithesis, and to say, that whether he was a bitter Tory or not, he was deserving of the gratitude of his most strenuous Radical opponents for the enlightened care he has taken of the condition of those under him. Lord Tollemache has divided his estate into a number of farms—small farms of from five to fifteen acres, with appropriate buildings and residences—and in addition to that he has himself built, or allowed to be built, excellent cottages for every labourer on the estate, and he has attached to every labourer's cottage three acres of grazing land. I am told that this experiment is satisfactory to him in a pecuniary sense. Whether this is so or not, it is certainly satisfactory to his tenants and to his labourers. They are not men who crowd into the towns in order to compete with the artisans. They like their work too well—they have too good a prospect to leave it ; and at the same time the production of the land has been necessarily increased, which is an advantage to the whole community.

But then it is said, ' You cannot expect every landlord to do what Lord Tollemache has done. It is not every one who has the capital to make this experiment.' Well, then, they must give place to those who have. That is why I have been anxious to call in the local authorities in every district, and to give them authority to take land at its fair value, and to incur expenditure in the pursuit of this enterprise. I do not think the local authorities would go too fast in the matter, and I do not think they would be likely to risk any considerable expenditure ; but I believe that experiments would be made in many districts and under very many conditions, and that, at all events, the best of the labourers, the most active and the most energetic of the labourers, would find that natural craving which is implanted in all who have been connected with the land—that natural longing—gratified ; and if the experiment were successful

it could easily have a larger development. In any case, I say that some experiment of this kind is a duty which the State owes to those who have been ousted by the action of the State or of individuals from their ancient right, and degraded to a condition which is so miserable that they fly from it on the first opportunity. I do not think that the landlords would themselves be losers by these experiments. Their chief interest in the matter is in connection with the value that would be paid for their property. I have said a fair value, and I admit that I do not think they have any right to expect to obtain for their land, either on sale or as rent, the extravagant sums that prevailed ten or fifteen years ago. But if they are unable to develop their property to the best advantage, if they cannot perform the obligations which attach to it, then I say they must be taught that their ownership is a trust which is limited by the supreme necessities of the nation, and they must give place to others who will do full justice to the capabilities of the land.

I do not intend—I have not attempted—to lay before you to-night any complete programme of reform. I have only referred to two of the most important points, and have referred to them as illustrating the direction our Liberal policy should take. I do not urge them upon your consideration as bribes to silence a democracy. I put them before you as duties which remain to be fulfilled, as debts which are to be paid, and as acts of justice which are demanded in the interests of the whole nation. The prosperity of a country is not founded on the extent of its territories or on the amount of its wealth. It is not measured by the magnitude of its commerce or by the profusion of its expenditure, but it is to be tested by the general well-being of the population —by the contentment and the comfort of the masses of the people. And if these things are absent, or if they are imperfectly secured, it is the business of statesmen, it is the duty of every patriotic citizen, to call attention to such defects in our system, and to labour without stint and without ceasing for their removal.

## STATE SOCIALISM AND THE MODERATE LIBERALS

THE EIGHTY CLUB, APRIL 28, 1885

. . . Now, there are two ways in which politics may be regarded. By many men the pursuit of politics is avowedly treated as a great game of personal ambition—not altogether ignoble, not entirely selfish, but pursued chiefly as an occupation for capable minds, and as varying with its excitement the ordinary monotony of life. But, then, to a large and ever-increasing number of persons politics is the science of social happiness, as its half-sister, political economy, is the science of social wealth; and to these men the pursuit of politics viewed in this sense is a duty which is cast upon all who desire to raise the general condition of those among whom they live—and political influence is the chief, if it be not the only instrument by which any large amelioration of unfavourable circumstances, and any extensive improvement in the condition of the masses of the population, can possibly be secured.

Whichever view we take, one thing is clear, that new considerations have come into the view of politicians, and in consequence of recent reforms they will have to enlarge the sources of their inspiration and to seek guidance and light from new quarters. The people at large have become, or will become, the true source and depository of power. . . . Whether we like it or not, the wishes and the wants—ay, and the rights—of the whole people will have to be considered. All classes of politicians, Whigs, Tories, and Radicals, will have to recognise their masters, and will have to obey their mandate. My friend Mr. John Morley, in his admirable *Life of Burke*—which, I think, would make us regret that he had ever left the pleasant paths of literature for the thorny roads of politics, if he had not given us some evidence that in his new career he will do as great, or even more, signal service than in his old one—tells us in that

history that the Whigs of the Revolution initiated the idea that a beneficent Providence had created the people of England in order that they might be governed by a select number of patrician families. That is an idea, however, which I should think their descendants have abandoned. I cannot believe that it is a pretension which would in any case withstand the shock of the Reform Bill of 1885, and I have no doubt that all parties in the State will be wise enough to endeavour to find out what are the wants and wishes of the people, and then to guide them towards wise methods of securing them. What, then, will be the mandate of the people in view of the general election which will be upon us in the course of a few months? That is a matter of personal interest to many of those I see now present, but it is more than that. It is a matter of national importance. The prosperity of the country, its future welfare, its whole course, perhaps, will be affected by that event, and every one here present in his own district at least may do something, according to his opportunity, to guide the masses to a wise and right decision. But one thing is clear. When the decision is given, be it for good or be it for evil, we shall have to accept it, we shall have to abide by it. I want to see what the leaders of political parties in this country have to say on the subject. What have they suggested in view of this great crisis in our national history! . . . To hear some people talk, one would suppose that this is really the best of all possible worlds, and that the only thing for a Liberal to do is to cultivate his own garden for himself. I do not think that the circumstances justify the optimism of Candide. Just let me take one or two facts in our boasted civilisation. It is perfectly true that political economy has every reason to be satisfied with itself. The aggregate wealth of the country has increased in a degree and proportion for which the most sanguine of our predecessors was not in the slightest degree prepared. The accumulation of capital has been enormous. The progress of science and invention has multiplied our comforts and has increased our luxuries. Trade has advanced in giant strides out of all

proportion to our population. That is one side of the picture. But continuously and concurrently with that there are always one million, or very nearly a million, of persons in receipt of parish relief. There are more than one million others on the verge of pauperism, who, in times of depression like these, and at any moment of bad trade, are subject to the most desperate privations. The whole class of the agricultural labourers of this country is never able to do more than make both ends meet, and they have to look forward in the time of illness or on the approach of old age to the workhouse as the one inevitable refuge against starvation. Tens of thousands of households do not know the luxury of milk. Children are stunted in their growth and dulled in their intellects for want of proper nourishment and proper food, and the houses of the poor are so scanty and insufficient that grievous immorality prevails, which seldom comes to the surface, but which is known to all those who move among the poor. The ordinary conditions of life among a large proportion of the population are such that common decency is absolutely impossible ; and all this goes on in sight of the mansions of the rich, where undoubtedly there are people who would gladly remedy it if they could. It goes on in presence of wasteful extravagance and luxury, which bring but little pleasure to those who indulge in them, and private charity is powerless, religious organisations can do nothing to remedy the evils which are so deep-seated in our social system. And that is not all. For every now and again incidents like the crofters' movement and Plimsoll's agitation bring to light a condition of things affecting whole classes in the community, who you find have been suffering very great injustice and wrong silently, perhaps for generations. These things are proved to be a disgrace to our legislation ; and yet we have found it possible, perhaps even convenient, to ignore them. I say, when I think of these things, it is not enough to sneer at the enthusiasm of men who find their hearts moved with indignation at evils which, perhaps, they are not wise enough to cure. It is not enough to treat these as the inevitable

incidents of the struggle for existence—the natural concomitants of our complex civilisation. It is not enough to discourage every well-meant effort for reform, and to stand before the people and propose no substitute as a remedy. . . . I ask you not to be afraid of words. Because the doctrine of natural rights was abused in the time of the French Revolution, do not ignore the fundamental right which every man holds in common for a chance of decent existence, but try rather to give it the sanction of law and authority, for it has the eternal foundations of justice and equity. Because State Socialism may cover very injurious and very unwise theories, that is no reason at all why we should refuse to recognise the fact that Government is only the organisation of the whole people for the benefit of all its members, and that the community may—ay, and ought to—provide for all its members benefits which it is impossible for individuals to provide by their solitary and separate efforts. I venture to say that it is only the community acting as a whole that can possibly deal with evils so deep-seated as those to which I have referred. When Government represented only the authority of the Crown or the views of a particular class, I can understand that it was the first duty of men who valued their freedom to restrict its authority and to limit its expenditure. But all that is changed. Now Government is the organised expression of the wishes and the wants of the people, and under these circumstances let us cease to regard it with suspicion. Suspicion is the product of an older time —of circumstances which have long since disappeared. Now it is our business to extend its functions, and to see in what way its operations can be usefully enlarged.

Let me take one single illustration. I venture to say that of all the legislation which this generation or century has seen, the most important, the most far-reaching, and the most beneficial is the socialistic organisation of State education. There is much in our present system which I have publicly disapproved. I think that that legislation requires a large extension, but this is not the time for discussing a matter of detail. Take it as it is, with all its faults, it is

the greatest monument of Liberal statesmanship which can be cited for the whole of the period which I have indicated. Take it from whatever point you will; look at it from the statistics of the Act itself; look to the effect which it has had in promoting a high educational standard among the masses of the people; regard its influence on crime, especially the extraordinary diminution in the number of juvenile criminals; its effect on intemperance, and the general elevation of tone and character among the whole people which it has produced; on all points I say that it remains by far the most thoroughly satisfactory and creditable piece of legislation to which we can lay claim. Is it surprising that we who look forward to the future should desire to give further application to the principles which are embodied in the Education Act? For my part I am convinced that the most fruitful field before reformers at the present time is to be found in an extension of the functions and authority of local government. Local government is near the people. Local government will bring you into contact with the masses. By its means you will be able to increase their comforts, to secure their health, to multiply the luxuries which they may enjoy in common, to carry out a vast co-operative system for mutual aid and support, to lessen the inequalities of our social system, and to raise the standard of all classes in the community. I believe that in this way you may help to equalise to a great extent the condition of men, and to limit the extremes which now form so great a blot on our social system. The general principles, then, to which, in conclusion, I invite your attention are these:—In the first place I urge upon you a full recognition of the magnitude of the evils with which we have to deal; in the second place, I insist on the right of those who suffer to redress; and in the third place, I assert the duty of society as a whole to secure the comfort and welfare of all its individual members. As a consequence of this, in the next place, I desire to submit to you that it belongs to the authority and to the duty of the State—that is to say, of the whole people acting through their chosen representatives—to utilise for this purpose all

local experience and all local organisation, to protect the weak, and to provide for the poor, to redress the inequalities of our social system, to alleviate the harsh conditions of the struggle for existence, and to raise the average enjoyment of the majority of the population.

## DOMESTIC LEGISLATION

HULL, AUGUST 5, 1885

[For 'the late Government,' 'the present Government,' etc., it should be remembered that Mr. Gladstone's Government was defeated on the Budget in June of this year, and was succeeded by Lord Salisbury's first administration, defeated, in its turn, in January 1886.]

IT is not desirable, even if it were possible, that all Liberals should think exactly alike, and that every candidate should be cut to precisely the same pattern. In the Liberal army there must be pioneers to clear the way, and there must be men who watch the rear. Some may always be in advance, others may occasionally lag behind; but the only thing we have a right to demand is, that no one shall stand still, and that all should be willing to follow the main lines of Liberal progress to which the whole party are committed. I do not conceal from you my own opinion that the pace will be a little faster in the future than it has been in the past. Everywhere the reforms to which the resolution has made reference are casting their shadows before. Everywhere in the country I see a quickening of political life. Everywhere there is discussion, and hope, and expectation. . . .

I am not altogether surprised, under these circumstances, that there has recently been a demand in some quarters that the leaders of the two great parties should frame a definite programme; that they should discard empty platitudes and generalities, and put a clear issue before the electors. I can say for myself personally that I have done my best in that direction; and although in the speeches I have recently made I have disclaimed any right to speak for the party as a

whole, I have been soundly rated for my presumption in daring to speak at all, and I have been solemnly excommunicated by some of the great authorities who claim a monopoly of the orthodox Liberal faith and doctrine. Gentlemen, I am not discouraged ; I am not repentant. I am told if I pursue this course that I shall break up the party, and that I shall altogether destroy any chance which I might otherwise have had of office. I do not believe it. But if it were true, I say that I care little for party, and nothing at all for office, except so far as these things may be made instrumental in promoting the objects which I publicly avowed when I first entered Parliament, and which I will prosecute so long as I remain in public life. The Liberal party has always seemed to me the great agency of progress and reform, and by the changes which have recently taken place it has secured a vantage-ground which I myself had hardly ever dared to anticipate. I had looked forward with hope to the future, but I had not supposed in my time so great a change could have been successfully effected. But now that my wildest expectations have been surpassed, I am not willing to be silent as to the uses to which I believe the people ought to put the new power and the privileges which have been conferred upon them. I had already a deep conviction that when the people came to govern themselves, and when the clamour of vested interests and class privileges was overborne by the powerful voice of the whole nation, that then the social evils which disgrace our civilisation and the wrongs which have cried vainly for redress would at last find a hearing and a remedy. And if that be not so, it will be no longer statesmen or Governments that you will have to blame. It will not be the fault of parties or of individuals, it will be the apathy or the ignorance, the indifference or the folly of the people themselves which alone can hinder their progress and their prosperity.

One of the speakers has said, and said truly, that this is a critical time ; it is the turning-point of our political history ; and if the people are content with the old formulæ, and with the watchwords which satisfied a limited electorate, then I

think some of us might have been better employed than we were when we joined the agitation of last autumn, and the enfranchisement of two millions of men will have been a barren and an unprofitable business. We shall have perfected the machinery, but we shall have done nothing at all to improve the manufacture. I do not want you to think that I suggest to you that legislation can accomplish all that we desire, and, above all, I would not lead you into wild and revolutionary projects, which would upset unnecessarily the existing order of things. But, on the other hand, I want you not to accept as final or as perfect, arrangements under which hundreds of thousands, nay, millions, of your fellow-countrymen are subjected to untold privations and misery, with the evidence all around them of accumulated wealth and unbounded luxury. The extremes of wealth and of poverty are alike the sources of great temptation. I believe that the great evil with which we have to deal is the excessive inequality in the distribution of riches. Ignorance, intemperance, immorality, and disease—these things are all interdependent and closely connected; and although they are often the cause of poverty, they are still more frequently the consequence of destitution, and if we can do anything to raise the condition of the poor in this country, to elevate the masses of the people, and give them the means of enjoyment and recreation, to afford to them opportunities of improvement, we should do more for the prosperity, ay, for the morality of this country than anything we can do by laws, however stringent, for the prevention of excess, or the prevention of crime. I want you to make this the first object in the Liberal programme for the reformed Parliament. It is not our duty, it is not our wish, to pull down and abase the rich, although I do not think that the excessive aggregation of wealth in a few hands is any advantage to anybody; but our object is to raise the general condition of the people. The other day I was present at a meeting, when a labourer was called upon suddenly to speak. He got up, and in his rude dialect, without any rhetorical flourish, said something to this effect. He said, 'Neighbours and friends, you

have known me for forty years. I have lived among you, and worked among you. I am not a drunkard; I am a steady man; I am an industrious man; I am not a spending man. I have worked and laboured for forty years; it has been a weary task, and I ain't any forwarder now than I was when I began. What is the reason of it? What is the remedy?' Gentlemen, believe me, the questions of the poor labourer cannot be put aside. Our ideal, I think, should be that in this rich country, where everything seems to be in profusion, an honest, a decent, and an industrious man should be able to earn a livelihood for himself and his family, should have access to some means of self-improvement and enjoyment, and should be able to lay aside something for sickness and old age. Is that unreasonable? Is it impossible? It is a condition of things which already exists under the British rule in certain communities, and in certain favoured districts of the country. It exists in the Channel Islands, under a different system of legislation to that from which we suffer. It exists in England on the estates of Lord Tollemache, and of some other great and generous landlords, and in villages scattered here and there throughout the country. Why should it be impossible for modern statesmanship to secure for the whole of the United Kingdom the advantages which, by a different system of law and custom, the Channel Islands have been able to secure for their population, and which certain generous and wise landlords have been able to provide for the benefit of those who are dependent upon them? Let us consider what are the practical means by which we can accomplish such an object. I am not a Communist, although some people will have it that I am. Considering the difference in the character and the capacity of men, I do not believe that there can ever be an absolute equality of conditions, and I think that nothing would be more undesirable than that we should remove the stimulus to industry and thrift and exertion which is afforded by the security given to every man in the enjoyment of the fruits of his own individual exertions. I am opposed to confiscation in every shape or form, because I

believe that it would destroy that security, and lessen that stimulus. But, on the other hand, I am in favour of accompanying the protection which is afforded to property with a large and stringent interpretation of the obligations of property. It seems to me that there are three main directions in which we may seek for help in the task which I think we ought to set to ourselves. In the first place, I look for great results from the development of local government amongst us. The experience of the great towns is very encouraging in this respect. By their wise and liberal use of the powers entrusted to them, they have, in the majority of cases, protected the health of the community; they have provided means of recreation and enjoyment and instruction, and they have done a great deal to equalise social advantages, and to secure for all the members of the community the enjoyments which, without their aid and assistance, would have been monopolised by the rich alone. You have, in connection with the great municipal corporations, hospitals, schools, museums, free libraries, art galleries, baths, parks. All these things which a generation ago could only have been obtained by the well-to-do, are now, in many large towns, placed at the service of every citizen by the action of the municipalities. I desire that this opportunity should be afforded to the whole country, and I think that, having regard to what has been done in the past, we may show great confidence in the work of popular representative bodies, and be contented to extend their functions and increase their powers and authority. Closely connected with this subject there is another question, which I think of urgent importance. I have spoken of education. I think the time has come when education ought to be free. I have always held that the exaction of fees in our primary schools was unjust and uneconomical, and prejudicial to the best interests of education. It is a system which has been long ago abolished in the United States. It has recently disappeared in France. It does not exist in the majority of Continental countries, or in the majority of the self-governing colonies of the British Empire; and I hope that the work-

ing men will insist that in this country also the system shall cease, which is only defended in deference to false and pedantic notions of political economy, and to the supposed interests of denominational schools. . . .

I will go on to what is the last but also the most important of the reforms to which I wish to call your attention, and that is the reform of the land laws. This is a question which lies at the root of the whole matter that we have been discussing. Agriculture is the greatest of all our industries. When it is depressed every employment follows suit, and when work is scanty in the counties and the wages are low, the agricultural labourers are driven into the towns to compete with you for employment, and to reduce the rate of your remuneration. Anything which could bring about a revival of prosperity in agriculture, anything which would increase the production of the land and give better prospects to the agricultural labourer, would do an immense deal towards raising the general condition of the whole country and would procure a market for our manufactures far surpassing any that can possibly be expected from foreign countries and even from our own colonies. The evils of the present land system are apparent to everybody. They are greater than accompany the land system in any other country in the world. Our laws and practice seem to have been designed over a long course of years in order to build up and maintain vast estates, until at the present moment something less than one thousand persons hold one-third of the land of the United Kingdom. In the meantime the rights of property have been so much extended that the rights of the community have almost altogether disappeared, and it is hardly too much to say that the prosperity and the comfort and the liberties of a great proportion of the population have been laid at the feet of a small number of proprietors, who 'neither toil nor spin.' The soil of every country originally belonged to its inhabitants, and if it has been thought expedient to create private ownership in place of common rights, at least that private ownership must be considered as a trust and subject to the conditions of a trust. Land

must be owned so as to give the greatest employment to the largest number of persons, and so as to secure the greatest possible return in the produce of the soil. The land was not created, and it must not be used, as a mere machine for exacting the highest possible rent from the cultivators of the soil for the benefit of those who own it. I have not time for anything like an exhaustive treatment of this vast subject. What I should like to do to-night is to give two illustrations of our present system, and then lay before you for your consideration some practical suggestions for reform. The other day, in company with my friend Mr. Saunders, and by his invitation, I paid a short visit to a beautiful part of the county of Wilts. The county of Wilts. at the present time is represented by four Tory members in Parliament, but I shall be surprised if at the next general election four Radicals do not take their place. There is plenty of reason for some kind of change. In the part that I visited there are thousands of acres of fertile land lying waste, growing only couch grass, because the owner will not let his land at a rent which would induce cultivation, will not give a lease which will give some security of tenure, and as a consequence the population all round is diminishing, and the little traders in the villages find their customers departing from them. Everywhere I saw cottages which at one time sheltered industrious families, and which now are closed and have fallen into disrepair. Meantime the labourers who remain are insufficient for the proper cultivation of the land, and they eke out their miserable wages of 10s. or 12s. a week, and in some cases of only 9s. a week, by the help of allotments, which they rent at three or four times the rate which is paid by the farmers in the immediate neighbourhood. One and all of these men whom I saw told me they could live a happy and comfortable life, if they could get a little land at a fair and reasonable rent—only a little of the land which was lying idle to satisfy the caprice of its proprietor. But in the same district I saw other properties well cared for indeed, over which, within the memory of man, the villagers could roam undisturbed, and which are now fenced in, and her-

metically closed against all intruders. I was told that in some cases the owners, not content with their abundance, have taken from the poor the roadside land which used to be free, the odd corners where the children used to play. They have stopped up the public footpaths, and exercised with the utmost stringency all the rights which the law affords to them. And, as if to make the case complete, I found there that a great endowment which was left for the poor of the parish and the immediate neighbourhood, and which might now be used to promote their happiness and comfort, is, the greater part of it, to be diverted under a scheme of the Charity Commissioners in order to create a school of secondary education for the middle classes in the neighbouring county town. I hope they failed. They have tried it in big towns, and where there is energy, and organisation, and influence, and parliamentary power, they may fail. But they try it in country villages—they have been trying it all over the country—and again and again, as I declared in my place in the House of Commons, the poor have been robbed of the endowments which were intended for their benefit. I hear sometimes that the agricultural labourers are very stupid and unintelligent—that they will not know what use to make of the vote which has been given to them. I can only say, if I may judge from the Wiltshire labourers I saw the other day, they are at all events aware of the injustice to which they have been subjected and of the wrongs which have been inflicted upon them ; that they are aware of their responsibilities, and will not rest until, with the co-operation of their fellow-labourers in the towns, they have reformed or abolished a system which condemns them to lives of hopeless and unremitting toil, and which refuses to them the opportunities of improvement and advancement. The other case that I wanted to mention was that of the crofters and cotters of the Highlands of Scotland. These men, many of them, are direct descendants of the clans which formerly owned the land. They had their chieftains, who were the guardians of their rights and property, for whom they fought, whom they served ; they shed their blood to preserve their

authority, and rank, and dignity ; but in the course of time the idea of guardianship and trusteeship disappeared. The idea of private ownership came up. Rent was asked in lieu of service, and with rent crept in the notion of private property, and now in most cases—in many cases, at all events—the chiefs have disappeared ; they have sold the land to which they had no equitable right—they have sold it to strangers, who are now the landlords and landowners of the soil which once belonged to the whole of the people. The crofters and cotters have been rack-rented, they have been evicted from their holdings to make way for sheep farms and deer forests, sometimes under circumstances of the most brutal cruelty and oppression. They have been charged rent on their improvements ; their pastures on the hillsides have been taken from them ; they have been reduced to misery and degradation. I have been in those parts, and I know something of the people of whom I am speaking. I believe a finer race does not exist within the four corners of the United Kingdom. In spite of all their disadvantages physically they are a splendid race of men, whom any country might be proud to claim amongst its defenders, and in morality they yield to no other part of the population.

Well, what is the reason for the treatment to which they have been subjected ? It is said the sheep farms and deer forests produce a larger return than the crofters could afford to pay. That may be so ; but seeing that a great deal is paid to absentee landlords, I do not see that the country benefits much by it. But in any case, I say that the land was not made for rent alone, and that the test of any system is how many families live in happiness and comfort on the soil, and not the amount of money which finds its way into the pockets of the landlords. Tried by this test the system has failed. The population of the Highlands has diminished and is still diminishing, and the condition of the people is going from bad to worse. It is time that a remedy was found. You know that the Bill which was introduced by the late Government[1] for the purpose of dealing in some sort of fashion

[1] *i.e.* Mr. Gladstone's.

with this subject has been dropped by the present Government.[1] They have time for a good deal. They have time to provide for the interests of the landlords of Ireland at the expense of the British taxpayer. They have no time to give to the claims of the Highlanders in Scotland. Well, they have dropped the Bill. I am not certain that it is very much to be regretted. It was the best Bill we could bring in with any chance of its being passed in the present Parliament, but I shall be surprised if in the reformed Parliament this matter is not raised again and subjected to more drastic treatment than could be expected from a limited representation. Now I come to the practical proposals that I want to submit to you. I am in favour of Free Trade in land. That includes the registration of title, the cheapening of transfer, the abolition of settlements and entails and of the custom of primogeniture in cases of intestacy. Upon all that, I think, we are pretty well agreed. It would do something. It would tend, no doubt, to the dispersion of those great estates. It would bring more landed property into the market, but I do not think it would do much for the labourers of Wiltshire, or for the crofters of the Highlands of Scotland. We must go further if we want to go to the root of the matter. Well, what can we do for the farmer? If we want to revive agriculture, the farmer must become prosperous. The farmer is a difficult man to serve. He is not in this country, I am afraid, a very wise man. I doubt whether he is wise enough for that. But he remains in this country, and he chooses to confide his interests to the landlords who represent him in Parliament, which is very much like, in the words of a homely proverb, setting the cat to guard the cream. The English farmer pursues a will-o'-the-wisp in the shape of Protection, and he excites himself very much about the relief of local taxation. Well, he must be a very foolish person to imagine that the people of this country will ever again submit to the terrors of the small loaf, and he must be a very sanguine man who imagines that any relief of local taxation will make much difference to the local rates. But

[1] *i.e.* Lord Salisbury's.

even if the farmer could get all he desired in those two respects, that would not benefit him one iota, though it might enable his landlord to extract a higher rent. There is only one thing that can benefit the farmer, and that is a fair rent fixed by an impartial tribunal—with the right of free sale of the goodwill of his undertaking, just the same as any other trader. He would be required, of course, to find a fit and proper person, and his landlord might object if the person was not satisfactory in character or means. Subject to that the farmer should have the same liberty of sale which is enjoyed by other persons. I am told that the farmers do not care about fair rent or free sale. All I can say is, that as long as that is their position they are not likely to get it. Nobody will impose upon them a benefit that they do not want, and that was only conferred on the Irish tenants after many years of bitter and almost savage agitation. But when we come to the labourers the task is easier. They know what they want, which is the first condition for getting it. They require that facilities shall be afforded to them for having decent cottages and fair allotments at reasonable rents and with security of tenure. Why should they not have it? Who would be injured if they did have it? The produce of the land would be increased, the respectability and character of the labourers would be raised, and the happiness of their families would be secured. Who would be injured? For my part, I confess I see no injustice at all in the case of great landlords, many of whom have driven the labourers off their properties, and have pulled down their cottages, partly in order to escape responsibilities in connection with them, partly in order to throw the land into immense farms, and partly for other reasons—I see no objection in such cases as these to compelling the landlords to repair the wrongs they have done. I do not see why you should not enforce upon them the duty of providing in every case a sufficient number of decent cottages with land attached for all the men who are required for the cultivation of the particular estate. I would leave the supervision of this duty to the local authorities, and in order to meet every

case which may arise I would give to the local authorities power to acquire land on their own behalf, and to let it out in allotments for labourers and small farms.

I believe that this would meet the cases to which I have called your attention. Where the landlord will not do his duty to the land the local authority would have power to step in and restore it to production. In the case of the Highlands, the local authority would be able to acquire pasture land, which is absolutely necessary for the livelihood of the crofters. All these things could be done, and only one other condition is absolutely necessary, and that is that when the local authority acquires land for this or any other public purpose, it should not be called upon to pay an extravagant or unnatural price, that it should be able to obtain it at the fair market value—at the value which the willing purchaser would pay to the willing seller—without any addition for compulsory sale. I believe that if these additional powers were conferred upon local authorities, if these additional obligations were enforced upon landlords, that at all events, so far as labourers are concerned, the land difficulty will disappear. Then I would go a step further, and I would revise the taxation upon land. I would equalise the death duties, as the Government recently proposed to do. To that extent, at all events, I would invade the sanctity of landed property, and in addition I would tax all unoccupied and sporting land at its full value. I believe that that would put an end to much of the abuse of which we now complain. And lastly, gentlemen, I would insist upon the restitution of the property of the community where it has been wrongfully appropriated. I would insist upon the restitution of the endowments which have been diverted to improper uses, of enclosures which have been illegally made, of rights which have been improperly disregarded and ignored. I cannot allow that there should be a prescription for such arbitrary acts as these, or that a man should be able to allege a long enjoyment of profits as a reason for immunity and a bar to all redress on the part of the people who have suffered.

I do not pretend that this constitutes an exhaustive pro-

gramme. It is, perhaps, enough for to-night. If objection is taken to it in any quarter, I ask my opponents what are their proposals ? If they have an alternative which is more effective than the suggestion I have made, I have no pride in the matter, and I will gladly accept it, but something must be done. We have been suffering now from a depression in trade unexampled in its intensity and duration. The privations which it has imposed have been borne with resignation and courage by those upon whose shoulders they have most heavily fallen ; but these men have a right to demand that the depression shall not be intensified or fostered by bad legislation, and that there shall be no obstacle or hindrance to the fullest development of the resources of the country. The sanctity of private property is no doubt an important principle, but the public good is a greater and higher object than any private interest, and the comfort and happiness of the people and the prosperity of the country must never be sacrificed to the exaggerated claims of a privileged class who are now the exclusive possessors of the great gift of the Almighty to the human race.

## LOSS OF LIFE AT SEA

HULL, AUGUST 6, 1885

[This was the occasion on which, after the defeat of his Merchant Shipping Bill, Mr. Chamberlain visited Hull, and, with Mr. Plimsoll at his side, defended and defined his policy, including his relations with Mr. Gladstone —referred to on p. 80.]

I READ some time ago in one of those journals which undertake to advocate the cause of the shipowners, and which do so with a vehemence and partiality which are not altogether creditable to them, that I dare not show my face in any port of the United Kingdom, for I should certainly be hooted off the platform. I do not pay much attention to what is said by the advocates of a bad cause. At any rate, the experience of Wednesday night and the experience of this

afternoon will do much to dispel the delusion under which these gentlemen have been labouring. I am strengthened to-day because my friend Mr. Plimsoll has been good enough to accompany me. I know you think, as I think, that the sailors have never had a truer or more disinterested friend. The shipowners have said that Mr. Plimsoll's agitation has been a failure, and that the legislation he has secured has been shown to be entirely useless for its purposes. I might reply to that, in the first place, that the legislation which has been secured is not Mr. Plimsoll's. What Mr. Plimsoll asked for has never been conceded by the Legislature; and although there is hardly a ship at the present time that sails under the British flag that does not carry what is called the Plimsoll mark, you know that no one is more decided than Mr. Plimsoll in ridiculing the absurdity of leaving to shipowners the fixing of the mark at which they should load their ships. If that mark were properly described, it would be described by the name of your senior member. This is Norwood's mark, and whether it is a good thing or a bad one, at all events your senior member ought to have the credit for it. But Mr. Plimsoll's agitation, although it did not secure the legislation which he desired, was nevertheless to a large extent successful. The statistics showing the loss of life at sea exhibited a great diminution in the three years following that agitation. The shipowners, some of them, were frightened; others of them made careful examination of the circumstances under which they were carrying on their trade. They were impressed by a conviction of the necessity of taking increased precaution. The result was, as I have said, that the loss of life fell considerably. After a time, no doubt, the effect wore off, and now we have arrived at a position in which the loss is as great as ever it was before. In fact, in recent years it has been greater. The black list has been blacker than it ever was in the history of the British Mercantile Marine.

I should like, if you will allow me, to tell you, as briefly as I may, the history of my connection with this subject. I have always taken great interest in the matter; and Mr.

Plimsoll will recollect that when he expressed a natural indignation in the House of Commons, when the Government of that day proposed to throw over the Merchant Shipping Bill, the town of Birmingham, over which I then presided as Mayor, was the first in the country to call a public meeting on the same day to protest against the action of the Government, and to telegraph to Mr. Plimsoll assurances of support and confidence. Well, when I came into office it brought me into close connection with this great industry, and I was most anxious to ascertain for myself all the facts which might possibly bear upon the subject. I was not long before I ascertained the general truth of the allegations which had been made by Mr. Plimsoll. I found that there was a terrible loss of life. I found that much of it was preventable. I found that the conditions of the trade were such as to tend to this loss of life, and I sought, in the first instance, the assistance of the shipowners, and of the best shipowners in the trade, in the hope that they would co-operate with me in seeking a reform. I saw scores of them. I saw the underwriters, I saw shipmasters, I saw everybody who was willing and able to give me any information in reference to the matter; and, speaking generally, I may say that, although there was some difference of opinion as to the causes of the wrongs that were to be redressed, there was absolutely no difference of opinion as to the extent of the mischief, as to the evil that was being done, as to the waste of life that was going on, and as to the direction in which a remedy should be sought. But when I asked for public co-operation, I am sorry to say, I failed in obtaining it. I found the best men in the trade, men who were conducting this important business in a way which could not possibly be criticised, and were doing everything they could for the safety and comfort of their seamen, men who would not be touched by any legislation which anybody might possibly introduce, nevertheless were so influenced by an *esprit de corps* that they could not be got to move to any extent. I was left therefore to my own resources.

Let me tell you what were the chief facts that were brought

to my knowledge. I found, in the first place, every year more than 3000 lives were lost at sea; that in some years this total amounted to 3500, and even more. Consider for a moment under what circumstances these lives were lost. Death is always a pathetic thing; but death, when it comes under circumstances of such horror, and when it comes in the shape of a violent end to existence is still more tragic and pathetic. And it is not only the men whose lives are lost, whose fate you have to consider. What is the fate of their families, who are left without resource, struggling against destitution, when the breadwinner is removed? The next point which struck me was this, that the proportion of this loss of life to the men employed was something extravagant and almost horrible. I stated the first time I had an occasion of speaking about this subject to the shipowners themselves, that it amounted to 1 in 60 of the men employed in a single year. I have since had more careful calculations made. I have examined the subject from every side, and I say that I understated the facts, and that the loss of life in a single year in the British Mercantile Marine has been actually 1 in 56. But what does it matter whether it is 1 in 56, or 1 in 60, or 1 in 100? It is a loss of life absolutely unparalleled in any other trade, and a loss of life which is deplorable in itself, and which ought not to be endured by a civilised people. Then I went on naturally to the next point of the inquiry. I tried to discover how far this loss of life was preventable. I am sorry to say I found too many men inclined to look upon it as a necessary incident in the prosecution of a great commercial enterprise. I say, if this loss of life is a necessary incident, no commercial enterprise which involves it is justifiable. But I do not believe that it is necessary. I have never found any one, impartial and experienced, who denied for a moment that there was not a large proportion of this loss that might be prevented if full and proper precautions were taken in connection with the management of this great business. I found, and this concluded my inquiry, that connected with this loss was the extraordinary fact that in a great number of cases, I am not

certain that it might not be so in the majority of cases, the owners whose vessels went to the bottom, the bones of whose crews whitened the sands—these men suffered no loss, and might even in some cases make a profit. I thought that this was a state of things which loudly called for remedy. I, for one, was not prepared to take the responsibility of standing with folded hands doing nothing to remove a source of so much misery and suffering to so many of my fellow-countrymen. I hoped there would be a universal desire that what is neither more nor less than a scandal should cease, and accordingly after conferring with everybody who was likely to be able to give me useful criticism and advice, I prepared a Bill which I introduced into the House of Commons.

I ask you to consider what were the principles of the Bill. They were simple. I will not speak about the details, but there were three main features of the Bill to which I especially attached importance. In the first place, I proposed to make it impossible for any man to make a profit by the loss of his ship and of the crew that sailed in her. In the second place, I proposed to make it impossible for any man to contract himself out of the liability to the owners of property and to the persons whose lives were at stake for the negligence of himself or the persons whom he employed. In the third place, I proposed that the Employers' Liability Act, which had done so much good on land, which had worked so well and had gone so far to secure the safety of those who are employed in our manufacturing industries, should also be applied to the sea service. When I introduced the Bill I introduced it as a measure which was outside and above all party considerations. I thought that all men, whatever the political faith to which they might give their adhesion, were at least at one in desiring the welfare and security of the men to whom we owe so much as we do to the British sailor. Well, I was disappointed. I received no assistance from the Tory party. When it was found that the shipowners in Parliament and the representatives of shipping interests were about to oppose this Bill, the Tory party were unable to resist the temptation of putting the

Government in the minority. Of course there were some exceptions. I would name one in particular, Sir John Gorst, the present Solicitor-General, who has always been a good friend of the sailors ; and he told me that whatever his party did he for one would support and promote the principles of my Bill. There were some other exceptions, but, speaking generally, I learnt very soon that the Tory party as a whole would go against the Bill and would do all they could to render its passing impossible ; and the leader of the party, the Marquis of Salisbury, on more than one occasion took up the cause of the shipowners, denounced me for my efforts, accused me of having brought a horrible and fantastic charge against the shipowners, and did all in his power to stimulate the opposition to the proposals that I had made. It became evident in the course of that session, which was very much occupied with other important work, that it would be hopeless to expect to pass such a complicated measure as that of which I was in charge. I made every effort to conciliate my opponents. I was willing to make great concessions, much greater than I myself approved of, but all failed. The opposition was continuous and persistent, and it became necessary to drop the Bill.

At that time I went to Mr. Gladstone and told him that I felt this matter very deeply, and I asked him to allow me to resign my office in order that I might carry this matter to the constituencies—and to ask them if they would allow the lives of men to be sacrificed to private interest or party expediency. Mr. Gladstone showed me on that occasion, as he always has done, the most generous and kind consideration. He asked me not to press my wish upon him, and expressed the opinion that if I were to resign, such a course might injure the prospects of some of the measures whose success I, as well as others, most earnestly desired. We were in the midst of the franchise agitation, and I felt then, as I feel now, that the best chance of success in this matter of doing justice to the seamen depends upon the resolution of a reformed Parliament. Therefore, in deference to Mr. Gladstone's judgment, and with the anxious

desire to promote in every way the reformed representation to which I attach so much importance, I consented to remain, but I did not abandon, and will never abandon, the purpose I have had in view. However, he did the best he could. When the Bill was withdrawn it was decided to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole subject. I endeavoured to make that Commission as representative and impartial as possible; the shipowners were again dissatisfied. They claimed what was absolutely unusual and unprecedented in the formation of such a Commission, that the special interest concerned should be represented by five delegate representatives in addition to those I had already appointed. I say that the demand was absolutely unusual. At the same time I did not offer opposition to it, and I did not object to it except so far as I feared the delay which the extension of the numbers of the Commission would cause in its proceedings. It was to me a matter of no consequence at all whether there were five shipowners or fifty on the Commission. I have always believed that when the Report is published the public will look to the opinion of the impartial members of the Commission and not to those who sit as the delegates of the interest chiefly concerned. The Commission was appointed; it has sat and taken a great deal of evidence; and now it has decided that although its labours are not nearly completed, the evidence, so far as it has gone, shall be made public. The shipowners are angry that we are about to publish this evidence. Now I must call your attention to a very curious fact. When we held our first meeting, the representatives of the shipowners proposed that the evidence should be published from day to day, and I myself supported their contention. I thought it was most desirable in a matter of this sort that the public attention should be continuous, and that it was well that the information which we obtained should be at the disposal of the public almost from the moment at which it was given. But a majority of the Commission, for reasons which I admit were weighty, decided otherwise. Now that we have sat for forty-three

days the same men who desired that the evidence should be published from day to day complain of the majority of the Commission because they wish to publish it in its present extent, and they say that the publication is premature and incomplete. I am inclined to think that you will conclude from that that the evidence has not been altogether satisfactory to those gentlemen. And perhaps if they had known of the facts that were to be disclosed, they would not have talked at the commencement of publishing the evidence from day to day. They say, however, that the Board of Trade has occupied the greater part of the time in elaborate figures and facts, and that the shipowners have only had a few days to rebut them. Well, that is not correct. As a matter of absolute fact the examination-in-chief of the witnesses of the Board of Trade has only occupied a very small proportion of the time which the Commission have already given. The rest of the time has been taken up in the cross-examination of those witnesses on behalf of the shipowners, in the production of the evidence of impartial people, and independent people like the Wreck Commissioner, the assessors in the Wreck Courts, ship captains, and other persons, and also in the evidence of some dozen or more of the representatives of the shipowners themselves.

I want you, when this evidence is published, to give it your careful attention. If you have not time to read an immense Blue Book such as this will be, put aside altogether the Board of Trade evidence; do not read a word of it, although much of it is important and I was almost going to say ghastly in its character and in the disclosures which it makes. Do not, I say, pay any attention to the evidence of the department; confine yourselves exclusively to the evidence of the shipowners, and see what admissions their representatives have made, and see whether those admissions do not justify all I have said upon the subject. Now I will tell you what the shipowners have testified to. In the first place, they have admitted that the loss of life has not been overstated. They have not attempted in any way to disturb the facts which show the total loss of life which has

occurred every year in connection with the mercantile marine. They do suggest that the proportion to the number employed is too high. They say we have taken too small a number as that of the total number of seamen employed. I will not now trouble you with arguments in favour of our views. Even if the shipowners are right, there still remains the fact that not only the actual loss of life is terrible in the extreme, but it also is true that the proportion of loss of life to the total number of seamen is exceptional, and greater than that in any other industry with which I am acquainted. In the second place, there is not a single shipowner who durst say that much of this loss of life is not due to preventable causes. They differ perhaps as to the exact proportion, but from the first they have admitted that if greater precautions were taken, if better arrangements were made, many families that are now left without father or husband or brother, who are now living without those who have in these capacities earned the bread of the family, might have suffered no such loss. The third important admission is this, that in many great lines of steamships and in the case of some important private firms there is hardly any loss at all. How do you account for that? It is sometimes said that the loss of life is due to the weather, and that the extraordinary gales which sometimes prevail are the act of God, against which no precaution can possibly do anything. Well, but the gales prevail just as much in the case of these great lines and these private shipowners as they do in the average trade, and if the former can conduct their business in spite of gales, sometimes without losing a single life in the year, why should not the rest of the trade do the same? Lastly, you will find in the evidence of the shipowners themselves proof that whereas some of them claim the right to insure their vessels to any amount they please and regard it as solely a matter between the underwriters and themselves, with which the public have nothing whatever to do, there are others—and these the best of them—who either insure themselves or always take a considerable proportion of the risk.

I might, I think, very properly here refer to one case which

has come to my knowledge in consequence of a return which was addressed to the Board of Trade. It is the case of the great firm which has done so much for the prosperity of Hull, and of which your member, Mr. Wilson, is a leading partner. Now, what is the history of this great enterprise? I have a return for nine years of the ships owned by Messrs. Wilson and Co., of Hull, and I find that during the whole of that time, in which they have employed the average number of 1200 hands, in which they have had, I believe, the largest fleet in the possession of any private owner in the United Kingdom—during the whole of that time the total lives lost have been 78—and yet the trade in which these ships are engaged is admittedly a dangerous trade. They go to the Baltic, to the Mediterranean, they cross the Atlantic in winter, they are exposed to the inclemency of the weather—yet in spite of that, and because they are well found, well managed, well manned, and well equipped, the loss of life in connection with their great fleet is less, very much less, than the average loss of life in the mercantile marine. Then there is another point in connection with this undertaking. Messrs. Wilson and Co. are self-insured. They take the largest risk upon every one of their ships, and if one of their ships goes to the bottom they are the heaviest losers. I think that is a good principle, and a principle which ought to be generally established.

Now let me pass on for a moment to consider the future. What are we going to do? The Bill of the late Government was withdrawn, and I, for one, will never be a party to introducing it again. That Bill did not go far enough. It was the most that I thought it possible to achieve under the circumstances of the time, but I will never again introduce so inadequate a measure. I believe that the principle that we ought to establish in connection with the mercantile marine is this, that no man has a right to risk the property of others, still more to risk others' lives, unless he takes a substantial pecuniary risk himself. I do not care much whether it is one-fourth or one-fifth, but it must be a substantial risk. We must do all we can to enlist on the side

of safety the most potent factor of self-interest. We must make it the interest of the shipowner to do all that is necessary to security. They know more about it than any Government department can do, or more than any Board of Trade surveyors can possibly know. When we make it their interest that no loss of life shall take place, I undertake to say that the loss of life will be enormously reduced. There is one other point on which I want to say a word. You will find in the evidence of the shipowners that the majority of them are of opinion that the British sailor has very much deteriorated. It is not the best of them who say that, and I am inclined to think that good masters make good servants. But suppose it were true, what is the reason of it ? The working classes generally have certainly not deteriorated. Nothing is more certain than that in thrift, in industry, and in temperance, in everything which makes a man, the working classes have greatly improved in the course of the last thirty years. Why should the sailors have deteriorated? It can only be because the conditions to which they are subjected are such as to injure their character. You will not wonder very much that the sailors have deteriorated when you find, as you will find when you come to read this evidence, that there are shipowners who have been engaged for years in this industry and who have lost every ship they owned. There is the case of one man, for instance, who had twelve ships and lost eleven of them. There is the case of another man who had nine ships and lost every one of them since 1875. And a curious incident in connection with this loss is that the last ship was commanded by a master who had himself previously lost four ships. There is another owner who had five ships and lost them all, and there are other cases. These unfortunate owners—or shall I call them fortunate ? for I do not know whether they lost anything by these calamities—is it wonderful that these unfortunate, or fortunate, owners, as the case may be, should find it difficult to get brave and capable men to man their ships under these circumstances ? I have great hopes from the sympathy of the working classes generally with their fellow-labourers in the maritime industry.

I hope you will not lose sight of their interests. I hope you will do your best to spread a knowledge of the facts wherever you can, and bring home to the conscience of the country, and of the shipowners also, the wrong that is being done by a system under which brave men lose their lives in consequence of the want of proper precaution, and proper care, and proper knowledge. Gentlemen, if you will do your part, I pledge myself I will do mine, in order that a remedy may be found for this great and crying evil.

## THE RADICAL PROGRAMME

WARRINGTON, SEPTEMBER 8, 1885

[The first speech of the Unauthorised Programme. The so-called Radical Programme was a political miscellany of the hour, the work of a number of hands. Mr. Chamberlain did not actually contribute to its text; and, though of course in sympathy, disclaimed responsibility. For a reference to Irish affairs in this speech see the separate excerpt on p. 241.]

WHAT is the Radical programme? I believe that the Liberal Federation which has been meeting here to-day has just published and put into circulation a work with that title, which I commend to your consideration. It consists of essays and articles from the *Fortnightly Review*, collected and revised. I wish that some of those who on Tory platforms go about abusing their opponents without much knowledge, would make themselves acquainted with the contents of that book. I do not suppose that they would agree with what it contains—they would not be Tories if they did—but at least they would see that there is nothing dangerous, and nothing unconstitutional, and nothing unjust, in the great majority of the proposals made on behalf of the Radical party. The most important of these proposals refer to the question of the land. I believe that the people of this country have seen clearly and instinctively that the greatest and most urgent reforms centre upon this subject. If we can do anything to multiply the number of those who have a direct interest in the soil they till, if we can increase the

production of the land, if we can find work for a large proportion of the population in connection with the greatest, the most important of all our industries ; and if we can make the lot of the labourers more hopeful and more prosperous, we shall have done much to bless both the town and the country, and to add to the contentment and the prosperity of the whole population. Well, what is our contribution to the solution of this problem ? We propose nothing extreme, I was going to say nothing new. We propose to extend the functions and powers of the local authorities. We proceed on the lines already adopted in legislation—in the Irish Land Act, in the Irish Labourers' Act, in the Artisans' Dwellings Act, in the Housing of the Poor Act, and in some of the Public Health Acts—and we propose to give the popular representative authorities the right to obtain land for all public purposes at its fair value, without paying an extortionate price to the landowner for the privilege of re-entering on what was the original possession of the whole community. We purpose also that the local authority in every district, under proper conditions, shall have power to let land for labourers' allotments, for artisans' dwellings, and for small holdings. We do not suggest that they should part entirely with the property in, or the control of, the land. That should be reserved for the community alone. We propose that the tenants should have entire security so long as they fulfil the conditions of their holdings. I believe that in this way we could do something for the agricultural labourers, something also for the towns ; for, remember, it is not an agricultural question alone. Every working man in every town suffers by the competition of the cheap labour which comes in from the country. I believe that by such a proposal we should do something to fix the labourers in the country, to tie them to the land, and to satisfy that earth-hunger which God has implanted in all who are connected directly with that industry. There is nothing new in the experiment. It has been tried for years by great landowners like Lord Tollemache in Cheshire and Lord Carington in Buckinghamshire, who have, to the great advantage of their

tenants, to the great honour of themselves, adopted the system which I have described; and all we want is to give to those who are the representatives of the community the right of doing for all their members what those beneficent individuals have done for those who happen to be dependent on them. I say that is a just proposal, a reasonable proposal, a moderate proposal. Nobody will be injured by it; nobody will be robbed by it; and I cannot conceive of a Liberal Government, or a Liberal programme, which should exclude it altogether.

There is another and a very important question on which I should like to say a few words, and that is the freedom of the schools. Now I think there exists some misconception as to the scope and nature of the proposal we make on this point. I see sometimes a statement that it would destroy the denominational schools and put an end to religious education. These are questions of grave importance, which some day or other—perhaps at no distant day—will be discussed on their own merits. But I wish to say that they are altogether outside and apart from the particular proposal I am making. You might free the schools to-morrow without in the slightest degree affecting the position of the denominational system, and I think those who are interested in this system are extremely unwise in attempting to connect its existence with arrangements which are already condemned by public opinion, and which really have nothing whatever to do with it. At the present time the total of fees receivable in all the schools of England and Wales amount to a little over a million and a half, and I believe an addition to the income tax of three farthings in the pound, as one method of providing the money, would be sufficient to throw open to-morrow every schoolhouse in the land, leaving all other and collateral questions entirely unprejudiced and untouched. I claim the freedom of the schools as a great aid to the spread of education, and as a just concession to the necessities of the poor. The fee is a great bar to regularity of attendance. It accounts for the greater part of the waste in our educational system. It accounts for the great majority

of the empty seats in our schools. A few days ago I received a letter from a schoolmaster in a great school in a Staffordshire town, in which he thanked me for the advocacy of free education, and in eloquent terms alluded to the pain and the anxiety and the labour cast upon him and upon his class by the necessity of collecting fees from the poor, who cannot provide them except at the cost of the barest necessities of existence, and who yet are too proud to apply for parish relief. This gentleman said he thought it would be interesting for me to see some of the letters he was constantly receiving from the parents to whom he had to apply in these circumstances. I should like to read to you one or two of these letters. It will bring home to you the nature of the hardships, the unnecessary hardships, which this system inflicts upon the industrious poor. The first letter reads, 'If you please I cannot send you the money this week. Their father has not done more than three days' work a week for ever so long. Please, sir, be kind not to send them home or we will be summoned for the money. He has never troubled the parish, and he says, he will sooner drown himself. I will try, if I can, to send some of it.' The second letter reads, 'Please, sir, my father cannot get work anywhere. For seven years he has kept his children at school, and he has been walking miles and miles in search of work, and when he returns we have had to wash his feet in salt and water. We have not got bread to eat, and we have no money to send.' The third letter states, 'I have done what I could this morning. I have not sent you all the money, but I send you a shilling, but there is more need to put it in the children's bellies.' The last letter I will read is to this effect—'You cannot form an idea, I am sure, how some people have to live; our poor children and ourselves have not had a bit of breakfast this morning, yet you send them to me for more money. My eldest boy has gone to work this morning without anything. I can assure you it is heartbreaking for me. They have been at the school ever since the opening, but we cannot send money when we have not bread to eat.'

Gentlemen, I say that these letters are pathetic—ay, they are tragic. They are disclosures of the endurance and of the misery which some people have to suffer because of the folly and the pedantry of others who hesitate to assist them lest it should prejudice their independence. I hold that in the new Parliament we shall do what every democracy has done before us, and open our schoolhouses for the benefit of our children, and for the advantage of the whole community. Education is necessary to the material advancement of every child, and it is necessary also to his mental and moral elevation. If I were a working man in a borough, or an agricultural labourer in a county constituency, I would cut off my right hand before I would vote for any candidate who refused to support such a necessary and beneficial reform. Well, there are many other points in the Radical programme to which I dare not refer at length to-night. I will only briefly mention two of them. There is the question of the revision of taxation. I think that taxation ought to involve equality of sacrifice, and I do not see how this result is to be obtained except by some form of graduated taxation—that is, taxation which is proportionate to the superfluities of the taxpayer. When I am told that this is a new-fangled and a revolutionary doctrine, I wonder if my critics have read any elementary book on the subject; because if they had they must have seen that a graduated income tax is not a novelty in this country. It existed in the Middle Ages, when those who exercised authority and power did so with harshness to their equals, but they knew, nevertheless, how to show consideration for the necessities of those beneath them. Then there is the question of the taxation of unoccupied land, of sporting land, of ground rent, and of mineral royalties. For my own part, I advocate all these methods of taxation, much less for the amount they would bring into the Exchequer than because I think they would discourage certain arrangements which have been productive of much inconvenience and suffering to the community. Then there is the question of the Game Laws. I cannot believe it possible that any Parliament, freely elected by the whole people, will

tolerate the continuance of this anomalous—I would even say of this barbarous—legislation, which is intended to protect the sports of the well-to-do. Lastly, there is the proposal, the just demand, which has so much fluttered some of our opponents, for an inquiry into the illegal appropriation of public rights and public endowments; and, if this be found to have taken place within the last half century, for their restitution, or for adequate compensation. I do not say that every one of these points is necessary and at once to be made a cardinal article for the Liberal programme; but I say that any attempt to exclude them from a fair, full, and impartial consideration will be fatal to unity, and will conduce to our certain defeat. The Liberal party of the past has been the popular party. It has been reinforced from time to time by successive Reform Bills, and now, after the greatest of them all, it would be false to its trust and unworthy of its high mission if it did not strive to bring the institutions of the country into harmony with the wants and aspirations of the people; if it did not seek continuously the greatest happiness of the greatest number; if it did not serve the poor with at least as much zeal as it brings to the protection of the rich; and if it did not enforce the obligations of property as strenuously as it defends its rights.

## RICH AND POOR

GLASGOW, SEPTEMBER 15, 1885

. . . I WANT to invite you to consider with me what are to be the first objects of the Liberal party, what is to be the nature and the extent of the Liberal programme. Before I go any further may I address two words to those who to-morrow may perhaps do me the honour to comment on what I am saying? In the first place, I beg them to believe that if to-night I confine myself to one or two main points of great importance they must not assume that I have withdrawn, or that I have repented of, anything that I have said in

previous speeches. In the limits of such a speech as my powers permit me to deliver to you, and your patience would suffer you to listen to, it is quite impossible that I can treat all the topics of vast importance which present themselves. I can only deal with each in turn as occasion may offer. The second observation I wish to make is with reference to a statement that in putting before you and other audiences what these gentlemen call a socialistic programme, I am influenced by a desire to bribe the new electors, and to get a cry for the next election. If my critics had done me the honour to follow my political career they would know that from the very first I spoke the same things ; I put before the people the same objects that I do to-day. I make no claim to any originality. I have only followed in this abler and better men. But the change is not in my opinions, not even in my mode of expressing them. The change is in the situation. Hitherto these views have been laid before a limited electorate and before the representatives that they have selected. Now I submit them to the whole people of the country, and now for the first time they have the power, if they are so minded, to give to them executive force and authority. What is the object of this political struggle to which so many of us are giving our time, our labour, our money, and sometimes our health and our lives ? If you are to believe some persons, it is a very poor and paltry business ; it is a mere contest between the kites and the crows, a poor contention for place and power animated by the basest and most unworthy motives. I suppose that those who are ready to attribute this meanness to their opponents must feel that under certain circumstances they could be guilty of it themselves. But I am glad to believe that the majority of public men in Great Britain are animated by nobler and more worthy objects. Politics is the science of human happiness, and the business of a statesman and of politicians is to find out how they can raise the general condition of the people ; how they can increase the happiness of those who are less fortunate among them. What are the facts of the case ? I sometimes think that we

are so used to poverty and to its consequences that we forget it or neglect it. Yet surely there is some reason to doubt the perfection of our system when in this, the richest country in the world, one in thirty of the population at every moment are unable to obtain the means of subsistence without recourse to the parish, and one in ten at the same time are on the verge of starvation. My friend Professor Thorold Rogers has lately published a very interesting book, which he calls *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, and in which he enters into an exhaustive comparison between the condition of the working classes in this country at different periods of their history; and the conclusion at which he has arrived, and which he supports by the most elaborate and convincing statistics, is that the general prosperity of the working classes in the nineteenth century is not so good as it was at the close of the fifteenth; and yet think in that interval what changes, what improvements have been wrought. The aggregate wealth of the country has increased out of all proportion to the population. Yet all the resources that vast accumulated capital can bring, all that the inventions and discoveries of science can bring to aid in the production of industry or the relief of labour, have done nothing to improve the condition of the most numerous and the most industrious portion of the population. Professor Rogers says, 'There is collected a population in our large towns which equals in amount the whole of those who lived in England and Wales six centuries ago, but whose condition is more destitute, whose homes are more squalid, whose means are more uncertain, whose prospects are more hopeless than those of the poorest serfs of the Middle Ages and the meanest drudges of the mediæval cities.'

If that is a general statement, I should like to give you a particular instance which came under my own experience. I was talking not long ago to an old agricultural labourer, seventy years of age, who told me his history. He said he went to work very early in the fields. 'Many a time,' he said, 'I have taken my dinner with me. It consisted of a bit of bread and some lard, and I was so hungry that I ate it

on my way to work, and I had nothing all the rest of the day. Those were hard times. An able-bodied labourer earned 6s. a week. Now they are better. In this part of the world they can get 10s. or 12s. a week. Sometimes they find it difficult even with that to bring up a family respectably.' Well, my friend worked under these conditions until he was nearly fifty years of age, and then he got hold of a bit of land—five acres of land—at a rent which was three times as much as the average rent paid by the farmers for ordinary land in the immediate neighbourhood, and the land was very foul, so, as he said, to use his own expression, 'If you could only have tugged on to the couch grass you could have pulled out the furrows with it.' But as it was he cleared it, he cultivated it, he has worked upon it till the present time. He has earned a living from it for himself and his family. But now age has come upon him, and rheumatism, which follows upon this kind of unremitting toil, and he said, 'My work is getting very hard to me, and I pray the Lord he will take me soon and sudden, that I may never darken the doors of the poorhouse.' I do not know how it strikes you, gentlemen, but to me there is something rotten in our system, when a man like this, honest, sober, industrious, respected as I know him to be by all his neighbours, at the end of a life of the most exacting labour has nothing in view but death or the poorhouse. I have made a calculation that if this man had obtained his land at the ordinary value, at a reasonable agricultural rent, at this moment he would have had between £400 and £500 laid by as a nest-egg and a resource for his old age. Gentlemen, in consequence of the speeches which I have made upon similar subjects I have been most severely criticised in the columns of the *Times* newspaper. That is a great encouragement to me. I agree with the late Mr. Cobden, who said that the opposition of the *Times* was an indispensable condition of any successful prosecution of Liberal reform. But on my speech at Warrington the other day the *Times* newspaper made the comment that I always spoke as though nobody had ever thought about poverty before. If the writer in the *Times*

has thought about it, it is to little advantage, for the conclusion at which he appears to have arrived is that there is nothing to be done, and that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. That is a very comfortable conclusion for comfortable people ! but the time is coming when it will not be accepted as conclusive. The remedies which I have suggested may be—I am painfully conscious of the fact —they may be inadequate, perhaps even illusory ; but what are the alternatives which my critics have to suggest ? If they have something better, I am willing to accept it ; but I protest in the meanwhile against the selfish apathy which would ignore the misery which exists in the midst of our abundant wealth, and which mumbles platitudes about eternal laws, unvarying causation, and the fitness of things, as an excuse for the misery and the suffering which are a disgrace to our civilisation and to our Christianity. Let me restate to you the position that I have taken up. I say that men are born with natural rights, with the right to existence and the right to a fair and reasonable opportunity of enjoying it. Well, I must warn you that the *Times* says that this is pernicious nonsense. I observed a gentleman the other day, a candidate for an agricultural constituency, carried it a little further. He said that human beings had no more natural rights than a pig or a cow. I think that was rather an imprudent statement, and this candidate will find out that pigs have not got votes, and that agricultural labourers have. I do not want to quarrel with the *Times* unnecessarily, and I am not particular about words, and therefore, if they object to the phrase ' natural rights,' let me see whether I cannot suggest something which they will be willing to accept in its place.

Let us put the question of rights on one side, although I could quote in support of it such authorities as Mr. John Stuart Mill, and also a certain document, which made a good deal of stir in its time, and which was known as the Declaration of American Independence ; instead of rights let us say that men are born into this world with claims—claims upon the generosity, upon the justice of society, and that

those claims ought to have the authority and the sanction of law. I admit that they are accompanied by obligations. I do not invite your sympathy for the lazy scamp or the idle drunkard, who wants to live at the expense of his more industrious neighbours. You know that there are numbers of men who are neither idle nor dissolute, and who yet are doomed to lives of hopeless and monotonous toil with no prospect in the future except a recourse to parish relief. To these men at least, I say, society owes something, and it is the duty of statesmen to find the means of paying the debt. Now then we have the problem. Here it is in two sentences. How can we increase the material resources of the poor; how can we enlarge their opportunities of enjoyment? Let me take the last of these things first; it is not perhaps the most important. I wonder whether you have ever thought what are the chief sources of enjoyment in the case of a very rich man; indeed, a man with one of those fabulous incomes which fill us with astonishment, which make some people envious and even irritable.

> 'It 's hardly in a body's pow'r
> To keep at times frae being sour
> To see how things are shar'd.'

But I think if you should inquire you would perhaps be surprised to learn if this rich man were, as I dare say most rich men are, a man of character, of culture, and of education,—I say you would be surprised how small a portion of his wealth contributes to his enjoyment. You would find a big establishment, numbers of servants, a luxurious table, and a well-stocked cellar, but very likely, if you went further in your investigation, you would find that he lived himself in the plainest rooms in the house, that he dispensed as far as possible with all attendance, and that while he provided sumptuous fare for his guests, he consulted his own health and comfort by confining himself to the plainest meats and the most temperate living; and you would recognise the fact that his chief pleasure was in his family life, in his studies, in his books, in his pictures, or in his garden. I say this to

you because it seems to me encouraging. We cannot, if we would, give to every one a fortune of £100,000 a year and a French cook; but we can, if we like, secure to every member of the community the enjoyments which are the chief prize of the existence of the cultivated and educated rich man. We can give them free education; we can put their feet upon the ladder which leads up to the storehouse of knowledge, and by free libraries we can open to them all the genius of past times, all the history, all the imagination, all the experience, all the science of all the ages. We can by galleries and museums cultivate their taste for art, and gratify their love for science. By parks and gardens we can give them the opportunity of innocent recreation and enjoyment. We can do more than that. By these same measures of wise co-operation, which some people call communistic, but which to me seem to be simply co-operative, we can if we like make every poor man's cottage as healthy as the palace of the rich, and I for my part see no reason why the poor man's house should not be as comfortable and convenient in its degree as the house of the wealthiest citizen. Therefore it is that I attach so much importance to the extension and development of local government in this country. Local government is very near to the poor. The community by its means, richer as it is than any individual, can secure to all its members the chief advantages and prizes of the rich man's existence. I desire to extend and develop the functions of local government.

As I came along to-day I found myself challenged in the columns of one of your most influential newspapers to develop at length my theories on the subject of local government. I do not know that I am bound to take my text at the dictation of the editor of the *Glasgow Herald*. He conducts a very able paper. I think we may admit that it is able, even if we do not agree with it. But I am quite willing to gratify, as far as time permits, what seems to be a natural and intelligible curiosity. I want to build up a system of local government from below from small beginnings. I would like to see no parish, no village, without some kind of

local authority. I do not want to crush out the germs of local life, however small and insignificant they may appear to be. I want to foster them and to promote the political education of the people. Then I want to see local authorities with wider areas and larger functions to deal with local matters in districts and in counties; and in this way I should expect to find the whole country covered with a network of popular representative bodies, able to protect the rights of the people and to care for their most intimate interests. But the *Glasgow Herald* would say, 'You have proposed to go even further than this.' Yes, sir, I have proposed that there should also be established in Ireland and in Scotland, perhaps also in Wales and in England, national councils for dealing with affairs, which, although they are national, are yet not of Imperial concern. I have thought that to such councils might be referred the local control and administration which is now exercised by official Boards in Dublin and in Edinburgh, and by the departments of the Government in London. Perhaps that would be as far as it would be wise to go in the first instance; but if these councils were approved, if the work were satisfactory, then I think we might hereafter even go further, and we might entrust to them the duty of preparing legislation—legislation on national as contrasted with Imperial interests. The projects of law which such a body would prepare might be dealt with by the Imperial Parliament, just as now Provisional Orders are prepared by the Board of Trade or by the Local Government Board, and are afterwards passed into law by the two Houses at Westminster. If the proposals which such councils made were just and reasonable in themselves, I should hope that they would be passed without much discussion; and, in any case, in this way, I believe Parliament would be relieved of a burden which is daily becoming too heavy for its shoulders, and at the same time national sentiment and national feeling would find their due expression in legislation. The writer to whom I have referred says, 'This proposal you ought to put aside, because it has been rejected by all your colleagues and by Mr. Parnell.

I do not know how the *Glasgow Herald* has become aware of these two facts, which were previously unknown to me. No doubt these proposals, although they receive support from very influential persons indeed, were not of a character to be universally approved by the whole of the Liberal party, and consequently they were not formally brought forward in the last Parliament. Never having been formally offered, I do not see how Mr. Parnell could have rejected them. It is quite true that Mr. Parnell asks now for a great deal more, and we know who has encouraged him to do so. But it does not follow that he would not take a great deal less. In any case, I agree with the *Glasgow Herald* in this, that a proposal of this kind ought to receive the fullest discussion and consideration, and that it ought not to be imposed either upon Scotland or upon Ireland unless there is a general desire for such an extension of national authority and jurisdiction. I would only like to add that I cannot see, except in some proposal of this kind, any issue from the difficulty in which we are placed by the ever-increasing work of our parliamentary legislation. The parliamentary machine is choked by the pressure of business, and obstruction will always have full scope and full play until we find some means of devolving in some way on local authorities much of the work we now undertake to perform, and which we either do not perform at all, or perform most inefficiently at Westminster.

I may also say before leaving the subject, that such councils as I have proposed would solve many questions which are now attended with difficulty. It would not be difficult from such a body, thoroughly popular and representative, to obtain, for instance, a conclusive expression of Scottish opinion on the subject to which I referred in the earlier portion of my speech ; and it would not be impossible —it would be most easy—for such a body to deal with a question which I think perhaps may be well treated separately in the three kingdoms—the question of free education. That is a question which has a peculiar position in Scotland. In Scotland at all events it is not a revolutionary proposal.

Consider for a moment on what grounds this proposal is now made to you. I urge that all the schools should be free, because I say without it you cannot obtain the full advantage from the system of national education which the wisdom of Parliament has provided. The fees which are now exacted are, I believe, the great bar to regular and universal attendance. That has been the experience in every country in which the schools have been made free, and in every town in which the experience of free schools has been contrasted with the experience of paying schools which have been established by their side. I do not want to relieve any one of his fair share of the cost of education. Everybody contributes to the rates and to the taxes of the country. All I say is that the particular way in which this tax is levied puts an excessive burden upon the parents at the time they are least able to bear it, and it helps to delay and to destroy what would otherwise be the beneficial work of our educational system. Now, what are the two principal obligations which are put on parents at the present time? They are compelled to educate their children and they are compelled to vaccinate them, and both these duties are laid upon parents, involving very large interference with parental right, on the ground that the interest of the children and the interest of the community require it. But you know that in the case of vaccination there is no charge for the service at the time it is rendered, and I think you know that if a charge were attempted it would be absolutely impossible to enforce the law. Well, why should education be treated exceptionally—why should there be a charge for education when there is no charge for vaccination? Why should education be made unpopular by the exaction of a fee? I read the other day at Warrington some letters I had received —most touching and pathetic letters—pointing out the sufferings which this tax now imposes upon industrious and honest people. I have received since a quantity of letters from schoolmasters, managers, school boards, and others, all confirmatory of the same experience, and what I want you to remember is, that it is not the dissolute and the intemperate

parent that suffers. He has no scruple in going for parish relief; but it is the industrious, decent man who has a pride in his independence, and who suffers everything, even to the limit of starvation, rather than undergo this odious probation. In Scotland, as I have said, it seems to me that this subject has a peculiar and most favourable position. School fees are only with you the invention of the last century, and I hope that the time may come—I think it is a most constitutional and conservative wish to express—when we may revert to the obligations which originally attached to the endowments that are now appropriated for the benefit of a single sect, and that with those endowments we may restore the freedom of the schools.

I come now to the last point upon which I will venture to say anything to-night. How are we to increase the material resources of the poor? For my part I see no hope whatever except in a radical revision of the laws which affect the tenure of the land. At the present time agriculture is very much depressed, and all our trade and manufacture is suffering in consequence; but I should like to point out to you that even when these circumstances were reversed, when farmers were making large profits and landlords were receiving great incomes from the land, the condition of the agricultural labourer was uniformly one of extreme privation. The artisans of the towns cannot separate their fortunes from those of their fellow-labourers in the country. The remuneration of labour depends upon the lowest rate which will be accepted by the lowest kind of labour, and the condition of the peasants in the villages holds back and retards the improvement which might otherwise be expected in the towns. Wherever the general condition of the country is satisfactory, there you will find that the labourer is at all events in great measure in possession of the soil he tills. That was the case in the Middle Ages in this country: it is the case now in Bavaria, in Switzerland, in the Channel Islands, in Auvergne, and many other parts of France. It is said that the peasants in France and the countries I have named endure more grievous toil than even the agricultural

labourers of this country. It may be so. I do not think hard work ever killed any one, and I doubt if it has injured many. But these peasants have what our labourers lack. They have hope and security, and the certainty of subsistence for themselves and their families. I believe that any reform would be altogether illusory and inadequate which does not restore the labourers to the land. I will say nothing about the reform of the laws of entail and settlement and the cheapening of land transfer. They are excellent things. I thought so a few years ago when I was denounced as a Radical and a revolutionist for saying so. Now even the Tories have come up to this limit, and I doubt not they will come a little further; but if we are to repair the mistakes of past generations, if we are to undo the work which an artificial system has done in divorcing the labourer from the soil, we must do something now to stimulate and encourage his replacement. The practical proposals that we make are not very startling, are not very extravagant, are not revolutionary at all. Like the great Lord Clive, I am astonished at my own moderation. We propose that the new local authorities should have power in every case—they need not exercise it unless they like, that is, unless the majority of their constituents desire it—that they should have power to obtain the land for public purposes at its fair value, and that among those public purposes should be the letting of the land for small holdings upon conditions which will give absolute security to the tenant as long as he fulfils them.

Well, this is a proposal which has already found expression in our legislature in the Artisans' Dwellings Act for instance, and in much of the recent legislation affecting Ireland, and for my own part I confess I cannot see why the English and Scottish labourer is not as worthy of consideration even as the Irish peasant. When I remember that the principle has been accepted—when I know the violence of the opposition which is now made to this trifling extension of it, I wonder whether the sting of our proposal lies in the new condition that the land shall be obtained at its fair value. Hitherto,

whenever a public authority has had to obtain land for any public purpose, an extortionate price has been demanded, and has been exacted, as the privilege of the landowners; but I maintain that this is not one of the sacred rights of property; it is an unjust extension of them to which we ought not to give any further sanction or authority. I believe that the ownership of the land is accompanied by obligations, and among them is this, that the land shall be cultivated so as to secure the greatest advantage to the whole community. It is open to the landlords voluntarily and of their own free will to fulfil these conditions. The best of them have already done so; but, if there are any who are unwilling or unable, where is the injustice in taking from them the possessions which they have abused and in resuming for the community the great instrument of all national prosperity, and even of its existence. But it is said that this proposal will involve a heavy charge upon the already overburdened ratepayers. I do not believe that it will involve the charge of one single penny. Why should it? Why should labourers who have proved themselves over and over again able to pay the exorbitant rents which are now demanded from them, when, with great difficulty, they are able to obtain a rood of land—why should they fail to pay a reasonable rent to the local authority? That is not the experience of those landlords who have already tried this system with the greatest advantage to their tenants and to the community. I heard the other day from Lord Carington, who in Buckinghamshire has eight hundred allotment tenants covering eighty acres, and all of them rented at a fair agricultural rent. He tells me that from this property there is annually produced £2500 value in addition to the average production of the neighbouring land, of similar quantity, in the hands of the farmers. He has no difficulty under these circumstances in obtaining his rent, his fair rent, from the labourers, and I cannot understand why the local authority should be less successful. In conclusion, I wish to invite, as I have done on previous occasions, I wish to invite alternative suggestions. I invite them again.

I say to my opponents, If you do not like my remedies—if, on the one hand, you think them inadequate; if, on the other hand, you think them extravagant—let us know how you will deal with the problem laid before you. How do you propose to help the poor? How do you propose to deal with the competition which now reduces wages to the barest pittance? How do you propose to stop the flow of emigration from the country into the towns? How do you propose to increase the production of the soil? If you have a better way we shall joyfully hear of it; but for my part neither sneers, nor abuse, nor opposition, shall induce me to accept as the will of the Almighty and the unalterable dispensation of His providence, a state of things under which millions lead sordid, hopeless, and monotonous lives, without pleasure in the present and without prospect for the future. The issue is for you and for the new constituencies. The people must find the solution, and for my part I have so much confidence that I believe that what the wise and learned have failed to accomplish, the poor and lowly will achieve for themselves.

## THE CROFTERS

### Inverness, September 18, 1885

. . . Now, before I sit down, there is one other question, which is also in some sort, a local one, on which I should also venture to say a word. That is the question of education. I have said that it is a local question, because the circumstances in Scotland differ very much from those in England, and also because in the Highlands there are particular grievances which require attention and redress. Think what education means, what it is to the poor man. It is, in the first place, the condition, without which all material progress is absolutely impossible; and, in the second place—and I am not certain that this is not as important as the other—it is a means of enjoyment, of recreation, something to break the never-ending monotony of toil. The develop-

ment of our national system has already produced results which are beyond the most sanguine expectations of those who established it. Crime in the country, and juvenile crime especially, has been diminished; habits of thrift and temperance have been encouraged, and the character, the tastes, and the pursuits of the whole people have been raised; but there are still numbers, not inconsiderable numbers, of the poorest part of the population who stand most in need of it, who are practically outside the schools, or the attendance of whose children is so irregular, that it is productive of no good result. I believe that this waste in our educational system is largely due to the pressure of the fees, largely due to the exaction of their payment just at the time when parents are least able to bear it. Remember no one proposes that parents should go scot free, that they should not pay for the education of their children, but the proposal is that they should pay for it as an assurance extended over the whole of their lives in their contributions to rates and taxes, that they should not be called upon to pay a sum out of all proportion to their scant incomes just at the moment when they are called upon to provide for the subsistence of their children. I know that many parents who are anxious for the education of their children are yet induced by the pressure of necessity, when slackness of work or illness comes upon them, to keep their children from school. I was reading the other day an account of the proceedings at a provincial school board in England, from which it appeared that they had recently instituted an inquiry into the circumstances of parents whose children were not going to school. A good number of illustrations were given in the report, and one or two of them struck me as significant.

In one of them a mother and father—honest, sober, and industrious people—were found with their children at home, thrown out of work by some accidental circumstance. The officer remonstrated with them and begged them to send the children to school, and they told him they had not the money. He said he would be forced to summon them if they did not, and in the course of a few days two of the children presented

themselves at the school, and then it was found out that the clothes of the other little ones had been pawned to enable them to pay the fees of the others who were receiving education. In another case where the visiting officer called, because a family of four children were being kept at home, he found the family without any bread to eat, and the bread-winner of the family was eating a cabbage-stalk as the only food he could find. Our critics say all this misery and wretchedness is unnecessary—why did they not go to the parish ? But that is the point. These men are miserable if you please, suffering if you like, but in their native pride and independence, these poor martyrs to a high ideal struggling with starvation, will remain so rather than have recourse to what they think the degradation of parish relief. Under these circumstances, it is a mockery and an insult for people who have never wanted for anything, who have necessaries aye, and luxuries at command, to add to the sufferings of these poor men, by demanding from them their uttermost farthing at a time when they have not enough to live upon, and to do this under the pretence that they are saving them from degradation. I have received a great number of letters from teachers on this subject, and I know that in hundreds of cases their generous compassion has led them to find out of their own pockets the fees which parents could not provide, and without which they were not permitted to give instruction to the children. I know this also—that in every case where a free school has been established, or in which the fees previously charged have been diminished, the attendance has proportionately increased. I cannot rest until I see this cruel and abominable tax abolished, and until every national school is free throughout the length and breadth of the land. I am told that these proposals would throw an additional burden on the already overtaxed ratepayer. I admit that the ratepayer is in many cases already overtaxed. In the Highlands especially that seems to be the case. I have heard that in some parishes the rate for education alone is 2s., 3s., and in one case I have been told it is even 6s. 8d. in the pound. I can only say that these cases

appear to me to be very exceptional, and undoubtedly abuses. A remedy ought to be found for such special grievances. I should treat them on the principle of the post-office administration. Suppose that the cost of every letter were charged to each separate writer or to each separate district, why the cost of a letter from one of the far off hamlets or islands in this northern country would be more than its weight in gold. I cannot conceive why in such abnormal and exceptional cases there should not be an additional grant to meet what is extraordinary and due to the exceptional circumstances of the population. But as to the general question of free education I have never proposed, and I should not approve of, throwing the additional cost on the rates. I think it ought to be provided from national resources ; and if I may express my own individual opinion, there seems to me to be no national resources more appropriate for restoring the freedom of the schools than those vast endowments which are now appropriated to the service of a single sect, but which were originally intended for the benefit of the whole nation, and were designed for the promotion of education as well as for the service of religion.

In conclusion, let me say that in the speeches which I have recently delivered in England and in Scotland I have had no pretensions at all to lay down any complete or exhaustive Liberal programme. That is the duty of a greater man than I—and that has been discharged by Mr. Gladstone—in the manifesto which was published this morning, and which will be welcomed throughout the United Kingdom, not merely as a clear and eloquent exposition of Liberal aims and Liberal policy, but also as a welcome assurance that the chief who on so many previous occasions has led us to victory will lead us on once more in the coming struggle. My task has been a much less ambitious one than that. I have sought only to obtain your assent to the spirit in which I think our Liberal policy should be conceived, and to some developments of our programme to which I attach great importance. My proposals have been, I think, sufficiently moderate, yet in some quarters they have been denounced as excessive and

revolutionary. They have been described by those who think the phrase a sufficient condemnation, as socialistic, but these persons have forgotten to tell you that they are also Christian. I believe that the democratic changes which have recently taken effect will bring about a change in the character of all our policy, and that the community in the future will recognise more fully than it has done in the past its obligations to its weaker and less fortunate members: that it will do something to aid the oppressed and down-trodden, to promote the contentment and the welfare of the whole population, and to secure in this way the stability of our institutions. The representation of the people has at last been fully assured, and I am convinced that the people will not suffer the existence of undeserved misery and suffering in their midst without at least an effort for their redress.

## AN ULTIMATUM

VICTORIA HALL, LONDON, SEPTEMBER 24, 1885

[From a speech delivered at the Victoria Hall in which Mr. Chamberlain defended the tenets of the Unauthorised Programme against the criticism of fellow-Liberals like Mr. Goschen. 'Mr. Gladstone's manifesto' was the address to his electors, published on September 7.]

. . . MR. GOSCHEN says that these proposals are not included in the four main items of Mr. Gladstone's manifesto. That is true, but neither are they excluded from the programme of the late Prime Minister. I have seen in some quarters that surprise has been expressed that I should have welcomed as cordially as I did the appearance of this important paper. But why not? In common with every other Liberal, I recognise the importance and the necessity of the four great reforms to which Mr. Gladstone has given a prominent place, and if they stood alone I should be bound to lend whatever support and assistance I could bring to secure their speedy adoption. But I do not understand that Mr. Gladstone desires to exclude from consideration those further develop-

ments of the Liberal programme which I have been pressing on the attention of my fellow-countrymen. I do not want to shield myself under his great name, and I should be ashamed to endeavour to extract from general terms and language any precise indication of support or approval. But, on the other hand, I hold myself free, without any suspicion of disloyalty, to continue to press for those reforms which I believe are called for by the just expectations of the great majority of the population.

Now, there are three points upon which especially I have laid stress. In the first place, I have pointed out that the incidence of taxation is at present unfair; that it presses hardly upon the working classes, and that it ought to be rearranged so as to secure equality of sacrifice amongst all classes of taxpayers in the country. On this point, at any rate, the language of Mr. Gladstone is precise enough; and it leaves me nothing to desire, for he says that 'the balance of taxation as between property and labour must be adjusted with a scrupulousness which unfortunately has too often been absent when property had exclusive control of parliamentary action.' Well, the second point to which I have attached importance is the freedom of the elementary schools, which seems to me to follow as the corollary of our compulsory education. On previous occasions I have pointed out the hardships, the unnecessary suffering, inflicted on the industrious poor by the particular form which this taxation takes, and I have also called attention to the obstacle which it throws in the way of more regular attendance and the spread of education. Now, if you will allow me a few words, I will endeavour to answer the principal objection which has been taken to this proposal. It has been said the poor will not value that for which they have not paid. Well, that may be so; but then in this case they will pay. They will pay their fair share through the rates and the taxes to which they contribute in common with all the other subjects of the Crown. The question is not as to whether there shall be payment, but as to how and when it shall be made. The question is whether it shall be made by means of

the general taxation of the country, and spread over the whole of a man's tax-paying life, or whether, on the other hand, it shall be a burden out of all proportion to his income, and pressing upon him just at the time when his necessities are the greatest and when the demands upon him are the most exacting. If we are now to assert that no public service will be valued unless it is paid for at the time, we have been proceeding on wrong lines in most departments of our administrative work. We ought in that case to make a charge to the British Museum and to the National Gallery. We ought to take entrance money at the parks, and we ought to re-establish the tolls on the bridges and on the highways. I cannot help thinking that the fallacy lies in confusing the public service which is rendered by the State to all its contributories and the free gift which might be made by one individual to another. The latter is an act of charity which may possibly sap the independence of the receiver, but the former is the fulfilment of a public duty which is called for for the advantage of all, which is rendered for the benefit of all, and ought to be paid for at the cost of all. Then, the third point to which I call your attention is the proposal that local representative authorities should everywhere have the power to acquire land compulsorily—at its fair value, for public purposes, and among these public purposes I have laid great stress upon the letting of land for allotments and small holdings. Now, gentlemen, if we are in earnest in desiring to multiply the number of those who have a real and direct interest in the soil they till—if we wish to stop that continual flow of agricultural labourers to the towns, where they enter into competition with the artisan and necessarily lower the average rate of wages, while they add to the overcrowding and destitution which we all regret—it is essential and necessary that we should find some additional facilities for enabling them to obtain possessory rights. Local authorities in every case will be the best judges of their special interests. They are not likely to act very hastily or engage in any wild speculation. Where landlords are willing, as some of them are, to fulfil their obligations, no external interference will

be necessary ; but where they are unwilling or unable, what can be the injustice, in view of the constant depopulation of the rural districts and in view of the widespread desire on the part of the labourers to get back to the land—where can be the injustice of proceeding on the lines of much of our recent legislation, and of doing for the English labourer what we have already done for the Irish peasant—who, certainly, is not more worthy of our care and consideration ?

Gentlemen, these are the proposals, simple, moderate, and practical, which I have recently been propounding in the country, and which have earned for me from Lord Iddesleigh the title of ' Jack Cade,' and from less scrupulous opponents unmeasured abuse and misrepresentation. Whether they will be included in the programme of the Liberal party or not does not depend upon me. It does not depend upon any individual leader, however influential and highly placed he may be. It rests with the constituencies themselves and their representatives. As far as I have been able to understand public opinion both in England and Scotland, there is a great and growing determination that the primary schools shall be free to all, and that the hindrances which stand in the way of education shall be swept away—education, the chief and essential instrument to all moral and material progress. In those country districts with which I am best acquainted there is also a strong desire that encouragement should be given through the local authorities for the creation once more of that class of small tenants and yeoman farmers which has contributed so much to the prosperity of other lands, and which in our own at one time formed the most contented and most prosperous part of the population. If I am right, these views will find adequate expression, and they will receive due weight and attention from the party leaders. If I am disappointed, then my course is clear. I cannot press the views of the minority against the conclusions of the majority of the party ; but it would be, on the other hand, dishonourable in me, and lowering the high tone which ought to prevail in public life, if I, having committed myself personally,

as I have done, to the expediency of these proposals, were to take my place in any Government which excluded them from its programme. In that case, it will be my duty to stand aside, and to lend a loyal support to those who are carrying out reforms with which I agree, although they are unable to go with me a little further. The sacrifice will not be one of very great merit, for I have not found official life so free from care that I should be unwilling to fall back once more into the ranks, and, in a humbler position, to lend what support I can to the common cause. I will not venture to predict the result of the appeal which is about to be made to the constituencies of the Kingdom. I have a firm faith in the righteous instincts of the people, and I believe that a great democracy, free to express its aspirations, and able to give force and authority to its behests, will recognise its obligations to all its members, and especially to those who stand most in need of sympathy and support, and will grapple successfully with that deep problem of poverty and suffering which has baffled the skill of learned philosophers, which has eluded the grasp of distinguished statesmen, the solution of which yet remains as the highest and noblest object of a patriotic ambition.

## ON POLITICAL HUMANITY

BRADFORD, OCTOBER 1, 1885

. . . I HAVE been, as you know, a great traveller of late. I have been north and south, east and west, and everywhere I have met with a welcome which has surprised as well as touched me. I am not, I hope, vain enough or foolish enough to mistake the character of the manifestations with which I have been greeted. I know that they are not in any sense a personal tribute; but they are the evidence that, in preaching, as I have lately done, the gospel of political humanity, I have reached the heart and the conscience of the nation, which will not suffer the continuance of great evils in its

midst, and the perpetual presence of unmerited misery and suffering, without at least an effort to find out the cause and the remedy. I claim no novelty for what I have been saying; it has been nothing more than the historic doctrine of our common Liberalism, which is based upon the recognition of our duty to do something to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number. I have not been, as some of my critics have asserted, indifferent to the services which have been rendered by great leaders of the people in the past—by Mr. Cobden, by Mr. Bright, and, greatest of all, by Mr. Gladstone. But where I differ from my censors, Mr. Goschen and others, is in the conviction that we also have our duties to fulfil, and that we cannot discharge our duties by standing indolently by, with faint praise for those who have done the work in the past, and barren criticism for those who continue it in the present. The great problem of our civilisation has been attacked, but it is still unsolved. We approach its consideration now under more favourable auspices than those who have toiled in these paths before. They had to appeal to a limited class, perhaps not altogether disinterested and unprejudiced; but now we have called the whole people into our counsels, those who suffer will have a voice in the discussion, and the search for remedies will be prosecuted with the co-operation of those who know most about the character and extent of the disease. Now let me recapitulate the facts with which we have to deal. What is this problem? England is the richest country in the world, and the accumulation of wealth has gone on in the last generation in unheard of proportions. It has been estimated that in twenty years the annual income of the United Kingdom has been augmented by 600 millions sterling. Everywhere you see the evidences of this great prosperity. It is said that we are passing through a time of depression; but if you will go to London, to any one of our large towns, you will see everywhere signs of improvement, all the marks of vast expenditure and luxurious living. Not long ago there was a great sale of the furniture and works of art which came from the castle of a Scotch duke, and, in spite of the great

depression, articles of not the slightest interest or utility to any one but the collector and the student were eagerly competed for at the auction at prices which counted by thousands of pounds. It is evident there must be at least a fortunate class which depression has been powerless to reach. And during the same time, although with some fluctuations, the general bulk of our trade has multiplied many fold; the production of iron, of coal, of woollen goods, of cotton manufactures, of all our chief industries has enormously increased; invention has lent her aid to swell the general tide of prosperity, and new industries have been created by discoveries in chemistry, in photography, and in electricity. Everywhere the resources of the country have been increased and its stored up capital has been augmented. Would not that be a pleasant picture if it were not for its reverse? Unfortunately, there is a pendant to all this luxury. There are among us continually, in spite of this growing wealth, nearly a million of persons who seek a refuge from starvation from the restricted charity of the State, and there are millions more who are hopeless of providing against any unforeseen calamity, against illness, for instance, or old age. I am sure every one who has any experience of the poor knows with what patience and with what courage they bear the evils from which they suffer, and with how little of envy or irritation they regard the good fortune of those who are more prosperous than themselves. But their resignation ought not to blind us to their claims. I do not believe it is just, I sometimes think it is hardly safe, to pass by those great inequalities, those flagrant contrasts, to speak of them as the result of unvarying causation, and the inevitable law of Providence, without even an attempt to raise the general condition of the poor and to do something to lighten the lot of those who are most miserable among our fellow-creatures. If we do not at least make the effort, I think we may find, in the words of the American poet:

> 'There is a poor blind Samson in this land,
> Shorn of his strength and bound in chains of steel,
> Who may in some grim revel raise his hand,
> And shake the pillars of our commonweal.'

I ask you to believe that I have never been presumptuous enough to imagine that I had found any complete or sufficient remedy for all the evils of our social system, neither have I been indifferent to the work which is being done in every direction by many reformers. On the contrary, I have welcomed their co-operation. I have, for instance, always attached the greatest importance and value to the services of those able and devoted men who have given themselves to the temperance cause. I voted in the small minority with Sir Wilfrid Lawson for the second reading of the Permissive Bill, and I have voted with him ever since upon every question of temperance legislation, not because I always agreed with his methods, but because I am anxious to sink differences in order to secure our common object and obtain popular control of a traffic that is the cause of so much misery and crime. Then, I have always supported the great trade union movement, and I have never failed to acknowledge the services that it has rendered to the working classes, whose independence it has done much to secure, and whose material progress it has greatly advanced. I approved the principle, even while I was a manufacturer myself, of all the measures for the protection of the working classes in our factories and in our shops, of the Mines Regulation Act, and of the Employers' Liability Act. I have advocated, and I shall continue to advocate, the claims of our seamen, and to attempt to give them some greater protection against the avoidable risks of their dangerous profession. I see with great pleasure that Lord Rosebery the other night spoke eloquently and well of the necessity for some arrangement whereby the hours of labour may be shortened, especially in the case of railway servants and assistants in shops. I am very glad this cause should have so powerful a champion. In the fifteenth century we are told that the ordinary duration of a day's work was eight hours, and I am convinced from my own experience, which is not a small one, that nine hours, at all events, is as much as either man or woman can give to continuous employment of the same kind without injury to themselves or with satisfaction to

their employers. But all these things, and others I could name to you, are so many branches of the same great subject. It is from many directions and from many quarters that we must seek for assistance. The harvest is plentiful; it is the labourers who are too few. There is room for all. Let us mutually assist each other. And if in previous speeches I have not referred to some of these matters, that is only because time has failed me to do more than indicate those other suggestions which I have made, and which are my personal contribution to the solution of the problem which we are now considering. Now, to-night it is unnecessary that I should deal with them at any length; but at the same time, with your permission, I should like to say a few words about them.

There are three things on which I have laid especial stress. In the first place, I have claimed a revision of taxation in order to remove inequalities which now, in my opinion rest unjustly upon the mass of the necessitous classes. Upon that I will not say another word, because the subject is one that is adequately dealt with in Mr. Gladstone's manifesto; and I am perfectly content to leave it in the hands of one who, by common consent, is an unsurpassed master of the subject. I have also had my say upon the great question of the reform of the land laws. I am not altogether satisfied to limit my aspiration to those two great branches of the subject which include the abolition of the law of settlement and the cheapening of land transfer. I think it is absolutely essential that we shall go further. If you want to raise the general condition of the whole people you must begin with the lowest stratum; and at the present time I do not hesitate to say that the toil which is least remunerative is that of the agricultural labourer. Whether that is owing to the deprivation of his political rights I cannot say; but at all events, now that he has been placed in possession of them, it is becoming, I think, sufficiently evident that he knows what is his greatest want, and how it may be supplied. I am convinced you can look for no great improvement in the general condition of the working classes until the just

claims of the labourer have been satisfied, and the steady depopulation of the country has been completely stayed. Why, England is no longer 'Merry England' since the labourer was divorced from the soil he tills. How to restore him to the land is the land question with which the great mass of the English people are chiefly concerned.

I saw that Lord Iddesleigh the other day said that he did not see how this could be done without plunder and confiscation; and, following him, other members of the party have gone further, until Mr. Stanhope told a meeting that the Radicals were going about promising to every labourer three acres of land and a cow. I do not know whether the Tories think that they will make the Radical programme unpopular by this description of it. For my part, it seems to me rather dangerous for the owners of property to confuse perfectly moderate, just, and reasonable proposals for effecting an object which everybody admits to be desirable with wild schemes of confiscation. They may chance to be taken at their word. They will go far to make confiscation popular if they point to it as the only means by which a natural desire can be gratified. But about my own proposal there is certainly nothing of plunder. I have been anxious that the final settlement of this great question should be referred to those new local, popular, and representative authorities which I hope it will be the first duty of any Liberal Government to establish throughout the length and breadth of the land, and to them I have suggested should be given power to acquire land by compulsion at a fair price for every public purpose. And among the public purposes one of the chief I have in view is the letting of allotments and the creation of small tenancies. I am convinced that at the present moment, in almost every village, there are one or two or more who are well qualified to take advantage of such facilities as these, and who would do well if only they could obtain at a reasonable price a fair quantity of the land that they cultivate for the advantage of others and without hope of benefit for themselves. I assume that these men would begin in the first instance

with allotments, and then, when they had amassed a little capital, their ambition would grow, and they might be educated to replace and replenish that yeoman class from whose disappearance we may date the rise of pauperism in the United Kingdom. What are the objections to the proposals which I have made? The landlords object—and they always do—to part with their land at a fair price. The right of refusing land for public purposes—for railways, for water-works, for chapels and schools, for roads and for allotments—has always been a cherished privilege, and whenever it has been invaded the landowning class have taken care to exact a very heavy compensation for the restoration to the community of the power to re-enter upon its former inheritance. I refuse altogether to recognise this as among the sacred rights of property. I say it is a right which has no sanction in justice, and which ought not to have the support of the law. We are told that these new local authorities would begin to job and speculate if this authority were conferred upon them. That is the objection which is made by those who have very little experience of popular government—those superior persons who cannot trust the people, and who do not believe in their power to manage well and wisely their own affairs. I know something of local government, more perhaps than most men, and I say I do not believe there has ever been a well-authenticated case of corrupt jobbery on the part of any thoroughly popular and representative corporation, although I have heard of many instances in the case of private bodies and close corporations. But even if such instances did occur, we know that the people themselves, those who are chiefly concerned, would have the power at once to find a remedy. Under those circumstances I have come to the conclusion that this increase of the functions of local authorities must be an essential feature of any proposal for the reform of local government. I believe by its means alone shall we repair the mistakes of past generations, and re-people the rural districts of England and re-establish on the land that hardy and industrious peasantry

which has unfortunately almost disappeared under the withering influence of mistaken laws.

The last point to which I have attached importance is the freedom of the primary schools. I suppose that a vast proportion of this great audience consists of working men. This question is your concern, and I appeal to you. I am told you do not care for free education; that you prefer the present system, under which the working man has not only to give up—which he is willing to do—the labour of his children at a time when they may contribute to the support of the family, but is also compelled to find out of his scanty earnings 9d. or 1s. or more a week, and to pay this tax at a time when his necessities are greatest and the demand upon his income the most exacting. If that be so, if you are satisfied, my crusade in favour of free education is doomed to failure; for no statesman could be expected to impose a benefit which would not be appreciated by its recipient. But I should marvel in that case very much at the patience and long-suffering of the British workman. His fellows in the United States, and, in fact, in every civilised country, long ago threw off the tax as an intolerable burden. The issue is in your hands. It may be decided at the next election, and if you care for this reform you will have plenty of opportunity of making your wishes known, and you may rely upon it that they will find adequate expression in early legislation. But there have recently been taken two objections to this reform, to which I refer for a moment, although they happen to be mutually inconsistent and destructive. On the one hand, it is said that free education will close denominational schools, and will therefore throw upon the rates, already sufficiently burdened, an enormous additional charge in order to supply their place; and, on the other hand, there are many good Liberals—I think your chairman seems among the number—who are afraid that free education may give a new vantage ground to the sectarian system, and may retard the complete assertion of religious equality. In my opinion it will do, or need do, neither one nor the other. It is per-

fectly possible to imagine an arrangement which would leave the position of the denominational schools exactly where it is to-day, which should neither diminish nor increase the obligation which is placed upon them of finding a proportion of their expenditure out of voluntary subscriptions. The existence of sectarian schools supported by State grants is no doubt a very serious question in itself, and one which some day or another ought to receive consideration. Whenever the time comes for its discussion, I for one shall not hesitate to express my opinion that contributions of Government money, whether great or small, ought in all cases to be accompanied by some form of representative control. To my mind the spectacle of so-called national schools turned into a private preserve by clerical managers, and used for exclusive purposes of politics or religion, is one which the law ought not to tolerate. But this is a question which can be treated by itself. It is independent of that which I have brought before you, and it seems to me it should not be mixed up or confused with the just claims of the working classes to a free education in all the common schools of the country. Now, these are my proposals. I do not know whether they seem to you to be wild, extravagant, impracticable, or confiscatory in their nature. I only fear they may be thought to be inadequate. I am fully conscious that they will not do everything to remove the evils to which I have called attention, but, on the other hand, I claim that they do something, in the first place, to promote that education which is the lever for all material and moral improvement, and, in the second place, to satisfy the just aspirations of the most numerous and most neglected class in our population.

Before I sit down I would ask leave to say one word as to my personal position, which has been, I will not say misunderstood, but at all events misrepresented, by those who affect to be the guides and leaders of public opinion. The very same writers who a short time ago denounced me for raising this question in order to secure my personal advancement are now equally indignant because I have stated my

determination not to purchase the ordinary rewards of political ambition by the sacrifice of the cause that I have at heart. I am accused of dictating terms to the Liberal party and to its great leader because I have said that I could not consent to enter any Government which deliberately excluded from its programme those reforms which I have been advocating as of prime importance throughout the length and breadth of the land. I may be mistaken in the weight that I attach to those proposals. I may have overestimated their popularity among the people, and, if so, it is quite right that others should lead where I shall have failed to obtain your support. But that I should purchase place and office by the abandonment of the opinions I have expressed, that I should put my principles in my pocket, and that I should consent to an unworthy silence on those matters to which I have professed to attach so great an importance, would be a degradation which no honourable man could regard with complacency or satisfaction. What is the complaint that I have to make against the present Government? It is that they are acting and speaking in office in absolute contradiction to all they said and did in opposition. I say that that is conduct which is lowering to the dignity of public life by whomsoever it is practised. I should like to quote to you the opinion of a great authority upon the subject, and who may perhaps not be unwilling to be reminded of his former expressions. It was Lord Salisbury who said, when he was Lord Cranborne and a member of the House of Commons, 'Our theory of government is that on each side of the House there should be men supporting definite opinions, and that what they have supported in opposition they should adhere to in office, and that every one should know from the fact of their being in office that these particular opinions will be supported. If you refuse that, you practically destroy the whole basis upon which our form of government rests, and you make the House of Commons a mere scrambling place for office. You practically banish all honourable men from the political arena, and you will find in the long run that the time will

come when your statesmen will become nothing but political adventurers, and that professions of opinion will be looked upon as so many political manœuvres for the purpose of attaining office.' Lord Salisbury is now in office, but how far he and his colleagues are supporting the opinions they expressed in opposition, let their actions and their speeches —aye, and their silence—tell. For my part, I accept the precept and I reject the example. I am told that in so doing I make it impossible that I should ever again be called upon to serve the country. I imagine that is a decision which will rest with a higher tribunal than the editors of London newspapers. But in any case, office for me has no attraction unless it may be made to serve the cause I have undertaken to promote, and if that reward is denied me, or is beyond my grasp, I will be content to leave to others the spoils of victory.

## THE LAND QUESTION

### Birmingham, October 20, 1885

... If our opponents are so impotent to deal with this matter, we may recur once more to the proposals which we Radicals have made, and which at all events would be effective for the main object that we have in view. We have proposed that local authorities should everywhere have power to obtain land compulsorily at a fair price for all public purposes, and that they should be authorised to let this land for allotments and small holdings. Lord Salisbury said that fearful evils would result from these proposals. What does he mean—fearful evils from the successful accomplishment of the objects we have in view, or does he mean fearful evils from the methods by which we propose to secure them? If he means the former, then I say that all experience is against him. Why, even at the present time, in the midst of the unparalleled depression which has affected agriculture, I can point to instances in almost every corner of England in

which small proprietors and small tenants are doing well, holding their own, while the large landowners and the large farmers are going to the wall. Let me give you one illustration. Take the case of Minster Lovell, one of those settlements which was created a long while ago by Feargus O'Connor, and which is frequently referred to by the opponents of small holdings as having been a complete failure. That is only because these gentlemen will not take the trouble to inquire into the facts. It was a failure in the first instance, but now it is a striking success. It is more than forty years since Minster Lovell was established in order to carry out the experiment of small holdings. Originally, the estate consisted of one farm of about two hundred and ninety acres, in which one farmer and perhaps three or four labourers had a direct interest. At the moment at which I am speaking there are seventy-nine men, all of whom have a direct interest in the soil. Is that a fearful evil? Why, it is an advantage to all these men who are deriving the benefit from their connection with the land; but it is not less an advantage to you—to all who are manufacturers or operatives in the towns, and for whose productions these men are customers, instead of being driven to swell the competition which lowers your wages, and which lessens the price of all which you produce. But is it the method to which Lord Salisbury objects? Well, I wish he would consult upon this subject some of his colleagues who have been to a different school of thought. Let him take, for instance, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I find that when he was speaking to an agricultural audience the other day he said, 'Every labourer ought to have a decent cottage and a garden at a fair rent, and if by some chance the gardens were not conveniently provided the local authority might be empowered to step in and even purchase land with authority from Parliament for that particular purpose.' Where is the difference of principle at any rate between this proposal of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and mine. It may be said, 'Oh! Sir Michael Hicks-Beach confines himself to allotments, and you propose that the local authorities shall have

power to go further and even to let in small farms.' If that be the objection, I must refer to another Cabinet Minister, and perhaps of our school of thought. The right honourable gentleman, Mr. Stanhope, my successor at the Board of Trade, speaking to his constituents the other day, declared what was wanted was a system of graduating an agricultural ladder, upon which, when the labourer got his foot upon the first step, he might ascend to higher things. I want to know whether in all this there are the fearful evils that Lord Salisbury anticipates. If it is a difference as to whether the local authority, having desired to let one acre, or two acres, or three acres, may go on to let ten acres or twenty acres, that is a matter of degree, a question for discussion if you like ; but it raises no principle whatever, and it is impossible seriously to believe that the one thing is perfectly reasonable, and just and expedient and right, and that the other would bring fearful evils upon the country.

No. I think I can guess what is the real objection which Lord Salisbury, a great landowner himself and the representative of the landed interest, takes to the proposal which we have made. He objects to the condition which we attach to our scheme, that the local authorities shall have power to buy the land at a fair price. It is the fair price that sticks in his throat, and here you have the fearful evil which excites his indignation and his eloquence. The other day at Newport he talked about the necessity under which local authorities would lie of purchasing land which will only pay 2 per cent., and when I pointed out to him that that would mean buying the land at fifty years' purchase, whereas the ordinary average price of land was from twenty-five to thirty years' purchase, he turned upon me at Brighton, and with the noble scorn that is characteristic of these great proprietors, he said that really it would be well that the discussion should be confined to those who understood the subject. He said, 'Mr. Chamberlain takes no account of the outgoings on the land.' I beg his pardon, I am perfectly ready to take into account the outgoings. What are they ? According to Lord Salisbury they are the money that is

required for revising the land laws, for providing buildings, and for general improvements. I should like to know the time, the ordinary time, because at present when landlords are seeking tenants and cannot find them no doubt they are willing to make sacrifices—but I should like to know the ordinary time when landlords made these improvements, and spent their money without a good return for this investment. Why, there are hundreds and thousands of cases in which they actually borrowed money from the State at 3 and 3¼ per cent., and then charged their tenants 4 and 5 per cent. for the accommodation. They not only made their tenants pay interest, but the whole of the capital in the course of their leases. It is absurd for Lord Salisbury to raise this question of outgoings, which is altogether beside the matter, and to talk of that as though they were not in an investment in the land for which landowners have always expected to get a fair return. But when Lord Salisbury spoke of the fifty years' purchase, he was thinking of the price which local authorities have hitherto had to pay whenever they have had to take the land of the country for the purpose of securing the comfort or the prosperity, the health, aye, or of providing for the lives of their constituents. It has been one of the privileges of the landowners under these circumstances to exact an extortionate price.

I will give you an instructive illustration. It is part of the history of the country. The whole of the circumstances will be found in the pages of Hansard. It was in the second session in which I attended Parliament that my late friend, Mr. Fawcett, called the attention of the House of Commons to the Bill which had been introduced by the Metropolitan Board of Works for a great metropolitan improvement. It proposed to carry a big street from Charing Cross to Tottenham Court Road, which was to go through a densely populated and miserable neighbourhood, where there are to this day hundreds of those wretched dwellings of the artisan class in London which have since excited the commiseration and sympathy of Lord Salisbury and his colleagues. Well, the Metropolitan Board of Works proposed to take the land

on either side of the street according to their usual practice, and in some way to lessen the cost of improvement by the increased value which the new street would give to the thoroughfare. But when the Bill came before the Committee of the House of Commons one great landowner on the line of route by his agents opposed the Bill, and claimed the insertion of a clause for his special protection, which provided that the Board of Works should not take one inch more of his land than was necessary for the formation of the street, and that he should have the frontage along the whole line of his property. Just consider what that meant. It meant, in the first place, that this landowner was to have the fullest possible price for his land. It was to be bought from him at its prospective value. He was to have compensation for severance, and then he was to have 10 per cent. for compulsory sale, and heaped up upon all this he was to have the enormous advantage and profit which the turning of his property into the front land of a great thoroughfare would add to its value.

Well, the Committee of the House of Commons, finding out that this proposal was altogether exceptional in its character, that there was only one single precedent for it, and that in the case of a great Tory peer, Lord Cadogan, a member of the present Government, whose property had been protected in this way in connection with, I think, the Chelsea Embankment, finding that the proposal was altogether exceptional, the Committee of the House of Commons rejected the clause. But when the Bill got up to the House of Lords—this great landowner was one of their number, a peer of great influence in the Upper Chamber—the Committee of the Lords inserted this clause for his protection, and for his protection alone, although there were many other landowners affected by the same Bill. Mr. Fawcett, I say, called the attention of the House of Commons to these circumstances, and he moved that the House disagree with the Lords' amendment, and so strong was the feeling in the House of Commons, that the resolution was carried without a division. A Tory member—Sir James M'Garel Hogg,

chairman of the Metropolitan Board of Works—said in his place that if this clause were pressed it would imperil all further metropolitan improvements, so greatly would it add to their cost; and another Tory member, Mr. Bates, the member for Plymouth, said the clause would be a fraud upon the ratepayers. Who do you think was the landowner the conduct of whose agents was stigmatised by Tory members in the language I have quoted? It was the Marquis of Salisbury—the Prime Minister of England.

Now, gentlemen, why do I refer to this case? I dare say that in this instance Lord Salisbury's agents acted for him without his interference. It is only fair to add that when the Bill went back to the House of Lords the chairman of the Committee which had passed the clause recommended that it should not be insisted upon, and Lord Salisbury himself concurred in the advice, although he did so rather ungraciously, and after defending the conduct of his agents. I do not doubt for a moment that in his private and personal capacity Lord Salisbury is a kind-hearted and a generous man, but I say that as a landowner he has so high and so arbitrary an opinion of the rights of property, and takes so low a view of its duties, that he is not a safe person to entrust with the determination of what shall be the powers and authorities of local governments in such a matter. Gentlemen, if these are the rights of property, I say they ought to be limited and restricted in the future. I am quite certain that unless we do this it is hopeless to expect that we shall be able to repair the effect of past mistaken legislation, and to give once more a stimulus to the creation and multiplication of small landlords. That is one of the great issues which we have to decide; it is one amongst many, but is not the least important. I am convinced that the feeling of the country is in favour of the proposals that we have made. The great majority of the candidates in county constituencies have already declared in its favour, and I cannot doubt that they will find co-operation and support from their colleagues in the towns. In the great fight we are going to wage, I hope that Birmingham will play her ac-

customed part—that she will be once more in the van of the Liberal party ; but I warn you, that unless you exert yourselves to the utmost, you will be left behind by the country districts. Everywhere in the counties there is a great awakening, there is enthusiasm and expectation and hope. When I was in Wiltshire the other day a gentleman told me that he had attended a meeting of Wiltshire labourers, and he was surprised at the quickness and intelligence with which they followed the speakers ; and he said to a man who was standing by him, ' How is it that these labourers understand politics so well ? ' ' Oh,' said the man, ' it is because, since they got the franchise, they have thought of nothing else. They talk of it by day, they dream of it by night. It is positively sickening.' Yes, I dare say it is sickening to some of those old-fashioned Tories to see how those who were once their serfs are awakening to their new responsibilities and to their new privileges. It will be still more sickening when the result of the election is known, for I do not hesitate to predict that if the towns do their duty there will be the greatest Liberal majority at the next election that the country has known during the last half century.

# III. SPEECHES ON IRELAND

## THE HOME RULE CRISIS OF 1885-1886

On December 17, 1885, the country was thunderstruck by a statement in the *Standard* newspaper that Mr. Gladstone had been converted to Home Rule. The unity of the Empire, the authority of the Crown, the supremacy of Imperial Parliament were to be maintained; an Irish Parliament was to be created and entrusted with administrative and legislative powers. There was to be security for the representation of ministers and the partition of Imperial changes; a certain number of Irish members were to be nominated by the Crown—these were the lines on which it was said that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to approach the question.

The report was denied by Mr. Gladstone, but in qualified terms, and nobody doubted its substantial accuracy. The general election of November 1885 had returned 335 Liberals to Parliament. The combined vote of Conservatives and Home Rulers exactly equalled the complete Liberal strength. It was clear that the Irish vote held the balance. At this time the experiment of governing Ireland without coercion had proved a miserable failure, and on June 26 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the Commons that Mr. W. H. Smith, who had succeeded Mr., later Sir W., Hart Dyke as Chief Secretary for Ireland, would presently introduce a new coercion bill. This left people in no doubt that the Conservative Ministry must go whenever the Liberals and the Irish chose to combine. An amendment to the address by Mr. Jesse Collings provided the occasion,

and the Government was defeated by 331 votes to 252. The majority included 74 Nationalist votes, while 18 Liberals voted with the minority and included Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, Sir Henry James, and 76 Liberals abstained. These last were uncertain of the wisdom of returning to power a leader clearly pledged to Home Rule. The mind of the 18 was quite definite against anything of the sort.

On January 28 Lord Salisbury resigned and Mr. Gladstone proceeded to form his new Government. Lord Hartington, Mr. Forster, Mr. Goschen, Sir H. James, Mr. Courtney, Lord Selborne, Lord Derby, and Lord Northbrook—these were of the Prime Minister's old colleagues who were not included in his Ministry. On the other hand, Mr. Chamberlain was appointed to the Local Government Board. The letter to Mr. Gladstone in which he accepted office was subsequently read out in the House of Commons, and made it plain that this acceptance was provisional. 'The statement of your intention to examine whether it is practicable to comply with the wishes of the majority of the Irish people as testified by the returned eighty-five representatives of the Nationalist party does not go beyond your previous public declarations, while the conditions which you attach to the possibility seem to me adequate, and are also in accordance with your repeated public utterances. But I have already thought it due to you to say that, according to my present judgment, it will not be found possible to reconcile these conditions with the establishment of a national legislative body sitting in Dublin, and I have explained my own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on a basis of a more limited scheme of local government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the land, and perhaps also of the education question. You have been kind enough, after hearing these opinions, to repeat your request that I should join your Government, and you have explained that in this case, I shall retain "unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection" in any scheme that may be proposed, and that the full consideration of such minor

proposals as I have referred to as an alternative to any larger arrangement will not be excluded by you.'

This letter was dated January 3. In less than three months (March 15, 1886) Mr. Chamberlain had written to Mr. Gladstone announcing his resignation. Mr. Chamberlain had always avowed himself not unfavourable to 'the principle of Home Rule.' But his earliest public references make it plain that by that principle he understood local self-government—the recurring phrase in his speeches at Warrington and Chester, before Mr. Gladstone announced his own definition of Home Rule.

In 1884 he had brought before the Cabinet a scheme for a National Elective Council buttressed by local elective bodies, which was an extension of the local government principle. From anything like a separate Parliament for Ireland he had always professed himself averse. On April 9, the first reading of the Home Rule Bill, he opposed that measure and gave his reasons for resigning, reading to the House his letter to Mr. Gladstone.

His resignation made, Mr. Chamberlain, though unable to support, had no thought of definitely opposing the Government. On April 14 a great meeting organised by the Loyal and Patriotic Union was held at the Opera House, Covent Garden. Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen spoke from the same platform with Lord Salisbury and Mr. W. H. Smith. But Mr. Chamberlain did not attend the meeting. He spoke against the Land Bill in the House of Commons on April 16, and his tone was conciliatory. Remarking on certain changes in Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy, 'In these changes,' he said, 'and in the prospect of still greater changes yet to come, I rejoice to see an approximate return to the views of my right honourable friend and myself, which I did not dare to hope for at the time I left the Cabinet. I am not an irreconcilable opponent,' he concluded. On April 21 came the famous address to the Liberal 'two thousand' at Birmingham, and both Mr. Gladstone's Bills were acutely criticised. He would 'sooner go out of politics altogether,' Mr. Chamberlain said, 'than support the

Land Bill. But as regards Home Rule Bill 'my opposition is only conditional.' He supported, by the way, 'a separate assembly for Ulster.'

Mr. Chamberlain was at this time still contemplating a Liberal reunion—the question of Ireland once disposed of—and a general resumption of his social reform policy. He was almost brought over by Mr. Gladstone's manifesto of May 3, which suggested that the Land Bill was no longer to be an essential feature in his programme, and that, as regards the Home Rule Bill, all that really mattered was the principle of a legislative body to be established in Ireland 'empowered to make laws for Irish, as distinguished from Imperial affairs.' He realised how much these overtures were worth when almost immediately afterwards he found himself attacked in the National Federation of Liberal Associations which had been regarded hitherto as virtually his 'ain hoose.' There, Mr. J. E. Ellis managed to move and carry certain resolutions giving unconditional support to the Government, and he was also actually threatened in Birmingham. Not at all a good subject for bullying, this experience might well have 'stiffened' Mr. Chamberlain against the official Gladstonians. As it happened, it was they who were 'stiffened' by their success in the Caucus, and Mr. Gladstone refused Mr. Chamberlain's last overture—May 6, 1886—praying for a definite 'there and then' undertaking on the retention of the Irish members at Westminster. On May 12 Mr. Chamberlain convened a meeting of Liberal members not opposed to Home Rule on principle, opposed to Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Fifty-two attended. Of these, thirty-two, including Mr. Chamberlain, attended an independent meeting called by Lord Hartington at Devonshire House on the 14th, and nine others sent sympathetic letters. Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain were agreed, for the present, at least, to act together and, meanwhile, to vote against the Second Reading. Mr. Chamberlain's speech on that occasion, which is given in part below, was remarkable at once for the attractive scheme on the lines of the Canadian Constitution which he then put forward, and for

a dignified vindication of his own line of action, which had, in fact, cost him his place in the Cabinet and an excellent prospect of the leadership of the Liberal party.

The division took place on June 7, and the Home Rule Bill was defeated by thirty votes, ninety-four Liberals voting with the majority.

Definite and memorable as was this event and his own part in it, Mr. Chamberlain's final separation from the Unionist party was not reached till later. His address to his constituents after the defeat of the Government emphasised the fact of incorporation as a Radical Unionist with Conservatives and Whigs 'in their opposition to a separate Parliament for Ireland'; he still harped on local government for Ireland, and indeed for the three kingdoms. And at a meeting in Devonshire House on August 5, addressed by Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, the latter dwelt not unhopefully on Liberal reunion. Various phases of this inclination culminated in the so-called Round Table Conference, held in January 1887, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley representing the Gladstonians, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan the Radical Unionists, with Lord Herschell as a fifth. The conference came to nothing, and was probably a mistake from the first, due to Mr. Chamberlain's anxiety on behalf of his social programme, which he thought imperilled by the secession from the Conservative Government of Lord Randolph Churchill, the personification of Tory democracy and his own personal friend. He had still to find that a Conservative or Unionist Government could be as responsive to his sense of a right progressive policy as any Liberal Ministry. Of the proceedings at this conference little, if anything, is actually known beyond this that they were abortive. Mr. Chamberlain seems to have based his plan on the acceptance of the Canadian model in the sense of the relations of provincial authorities, dealing only with certain subjects referred to them, and answerable to a Federal—in this case to the Imperial—Parliament. In that sense the Canadian analogy is constantly and favourably touched on in his speeches of

this time. The parties to the conference did not agree; an article by Mr. Chamberlain in the *Baptist* protesting against Home Rule as an obstacle to social reform was made the pretext for suspending its proceedings, and, to that effect, Sir William Harcourt, by Mr. Gladstone's direction, wrote to Mr. Chamberlain. Easter 1887 was regarded as marking the turning-point, the definite and final separation of Mr. Chamberlain and his former political colleagues and friends. Speaking on June 1, 1887, at the first annual meeting of the National Radical Union—founded in June 1886—he crossed the rubicon. 'We shall be taunted, I suppose, with an alliance with the Tories. At least our allies will be English gentlemen, and not the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy. I look beyond mere party considerations. The Government may be Tory, but if its measures are liberal, I am prepared to discuss them on their merits, and without regard to past controversies.'

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## AFTER THE LAND ACT

### Liverpool, October 25, 1881

[The Liberal Government had devoted the greater part of the session of 1881 to passing a Land Act, which was accepted by the Irish party as securing to Irish tenants the demand formulated on their behalf by the Land League, and popularly known as the three F's—fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale. In the meantime, however, the organisation of the League had passed under the control of the agents of Irish revolutionary societies; and outrage and assassination prevailed over a great part of Ireland. It was evident that the object of the League was now changed, and that a determined effort was being made to render all government impossible. In these circumstances the Cabinet resolved on suppressing an organisation which Mr. Gladstone characterised as preaching in Ireland 'the doctrines of public plunder.' The following passages are from a speech delivered by Mr. Chamberlain at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation in justification of the Government.]

When it is said that it is contrary to Liberal principles to suspend the safeguards of liberty, I say that liberty is a mere phantom unless every man is free to pursue his inclinations,

and to consult his interests within and under the protection of the law; and when the League undertook in every case to supersede private judgment and to impose its dictates by force, terrorism, and intimidation, then it became a tyranny as obnoxious to Liberals and to Liberalism as any other form of despotism. It is quite possible that in the early days of the agitation there were some cases in which equally reprehensible practices had been indulged in. But that was exceptional—it was the work entirely of irresponsible persons, and one which could not be traced directly to the action of that organisation. Now all that has recently changed. What was formerly exceptional has become the rule; and, in the meantime, with the new objects of the Land League I do not think that Liberals any more than Tories can have any sympathy. It is one thing to sympathise with proposals for reforms of the law, but it is quite a different thing when those proposals become law to repudiate the obligations upon which the law is founded, and to promote agitation which plainly covers and includes revolutionary designs. In such a case as this conciliation is at an end. It is not a case of meeting just demands. Unless the Government of the country are prepared to accept the idea of the secession of Ireland from the Union, and a severance between the two countries, the time has come when the Government is bound to assert its authority. Now, is this question of separation one upon which there is any difference of opinion amongst us? I assume we are prepared now, as we have been all along, to consider impartially every Irish claim, to remedy every proved grievance; to endeavour to govern Ireland, not according to English prejudices, but according to the wishes of all that is most intelligent amongst the Irish people.

Are we ready to consider the Union itself as a standing grievance? and are we prepared to admit that the question of separation is an open one between us? Well, I say for myself that I am not prepared to admit that this is possible, either in the interest of this country or in the interest of Ireland,—that there should be created a hostile power

within striking distance of these shores. I suppose that the first result of this would be that independent Ireland would be plunged into civil war, in which we would be forced to take a side. Ireland independent must always be jealous and afraid of England, which would be a strong military and commercial nation close to her. Ireland would be crushed under the weight of military and naval expenditure which it would have to maintain in order to secure its separate existence. We should find our burdens enlarged in proportion. The two countries would be a standing menace one to the other; sooner or later the condition would be intolerable. We should have to commence the struggle anew, and Ireland would have to be reconquered, or England would be ruined.

I am not prepared to face these contingencies; and therefore I say, Liberal and Radical as I profess myself to be, I say to Ireland what the Liberals and the Republicans of the North said to the Southern States of America—'The Union must be preserved; you cannot and you shall not destroy it.' Within these limits there is nothing which you may not ask and hope to obtain—equal laws, equal justice, equal opportunities, equal prosperity. These shall be freely accorded to you, your wishes shall be our guide, your prejudices shall be by us respected, your interests shall be our interests; but nature and your position have forged indissoluble links, which cannot be sundered without being fraught with consequences of misery and ruin to both our countries, and we will use all the resources of the Empire to keep them intact.

But if this is our decision, the Government is bound to put down revolution, whether it takes the form of an uprising of men in arms, or whether it is veiled or cloaked in insidious disguise, and aims at destroying the Government by subverting law and by promoting social anarchy and disorganisation. You know the spirit in which we have approached this task. Order must be maintained. Men with ulterior and dangerous designs must be restrained, must not be allowed to intercept the benefits of a measure they them-

selves, or many of them, have admitted to be just, and generous, and comprehensive in its character, and calculated to remove the evil of which they complain. . . .

Sir, the future is still uncertain, but I think it is not without hope. Our contest is not yet—I hope it never may be—with the Irish people. I do not conceal from myself that the probability is that many of them sympathise with the views for which their leaders have been imprisoned; but there is a long distance between sympathy and putting sympathy into actual practice, and the prevalence of intimidation shows that sympathy alone was not a sufficient motive to induce the majority of the Irish tenants to sacrifice the great advantages which we offer them in order to follow the dangerous counsels which some of their leaders have tendered. They have learnt now that this Government—only too happy to yield everything which justice can demand—will not be moved by threats to go one inch beyond. They will see the Ulster tenants crowd into the Land Courts to protect their property. They will have read the advice which has recently been given by Archbishop Croke and others, whose sympathy with the earlier stages of this agitation gives weight to their present statements; and I do not believe they will be found in the long run to reject the greatest boon which has ever been offered to a people in order to engage in a hopeless contest in which the teachings of morality, the dictates of common honesty, and all the forces of law and order will be against them. It is said that we have not earned the gratitude of the Irish people. I suppose that this generation must pass away, and the Land Act must work a silent revolution in the condition of the Irish people, before they will be able to recognise the sacrifices and the efforts of those who have striven to benefit them and to do something to retrieve the injustice and the oppression of the past. Not for this will we despair. We may take to heart the words of an American poet in the darker days of his country's history, and addressed to those who were struggling for reforms which then seemed hopeless of accomplishment—

'Yet do thy work; it shall succeed
In thine or in another's day;
And if denied the victor's meed,
Ye shall not lack the toiler's pay.'

The time shall come when the unhappy passions which have been excited by these events will be forgotten, and when the slowly ripened harvest of justice and conciliation may be gathered in. It is now little more than a hundred years since the people of Scotland were as hotly opposed to English rule as the Irish people are at the present time. Now we are one nation, with no diversity of interest, and animated by a common loyalty. What time and good government have done for Scotland, time and good government will surely do for Ireland too. And meanwhile you may rest assured that we will not flinch in our determination to maintain the connection between the two countries, not for any selfish British interest, not to gratify imperial pride, but to increase the happiness and to secure the tranquillity of a united people.

## A FORECAST

### Warrington, September 8, 1885

[From the first speech of the 'Unauthorised Programme,' see p. 189. The reference to Irish affairs is a key to the speaker's action later.]

. . . What is Mr. Parnell's programme? He says that in his opinion the time has come to abandon altogether all attempts to obtain further remedial measures or subsidiary reforms and to concentrate the efforts of the Irish representatives upon the securing of a single chamber, whose first object it will be to put a protective duty against all English manufacturers. Then he says in the second place that he expects Whig and Tory will vie with one another in helping him to a settlement on his own terms; and he says in the last place that if any party seeks to make that object impossible, he and his friends will

make all things impossible for them. Well, gentlemen, I am not a Whig, and I am certainly not a Tory. But, speaking for myself, I say if these and these alone are the terms on which Mr. Parnell's support is to be obtained, I will not enter into competition for it. This new programme of Mr. Parnell's involves a great extension of anything that we have hitherto understood by 'Home Rule.' The powers he claims for his separate Parliament are altogether beyond anything which exists in the case of the State Legislatures of the American Union, which has hitherto been the type and model of the Irish demands; and if this claim were conceded, we might as well for ever abandon all hope of maintaining a United Kingdom. We should establish within less than thirty miles of our shores a new foreign country, animated from the outset with unfriendly intentions towards ourselves. A policy like that I firmly believe would be disastrous and ruinous to Ireland herself. It would be dangerous to the security of this country, and under these circumstances I hold that we are bound to take every step in our power to avert so great a calamity. We will appeal, in the first place, to the Irish people. I cannot bring myself to believe that they are so prejudiced by the recollection of past wrongs that they will not recognise the anxiety of the present generation of Englishmen to do them justice, to remove every tangible grievance, and establish equal laws between the three kingdoms; and I think if they are persuaded of this they will be unwilling to sever themselves from the common history of the United Kingdom, in which Irishmen have taken so great and glorious a part. I won't dwell upon the threats with which Mr. Parnell has accompanied his demand. I suppose they were intended for Irish consumption; but I think they were unnecessary and uncalled for. Mr. Parnell seems to me to forget the change which has come over our constitutional system. He is no longer dealing with interests and classes, represented in the British House of Commons altogether out of proportion to their number, but he is face to face with the whole population of England

and Scotland, reinforced, as it will be, at least by one-fifth of the population of Ireland itself; and to threaten thirty-two millions of people with the vengeance of four millions is a rhetorical artifice which is altogether unworthy of Mr. Parnell's power and influence. But it is said by him that justice requires we should concede to Irishmen the absolute right of self-government. I would reply that it is a right which must be considered in relation to the security and welfare of the other countries in juxtaposition to which Ireland is placed, and with whose interests hers are indissolubly linked. I cannot admit that five millions of Irishmen have any greater inherent right to govern themselves without regard to the rest of the United Kingdom than the five million inhabitants of the metropolis. God has made us neighbours, and I would to heaven that our rulers had made us friends. But as neighbours neither one nor the other has any right so to rule his own household as to be a source of annoyance or danger to the other. Subject to that limitation, I, for my part, would concede the greatest possible measure of local government to the Irish people, as I would concede it also to the English and the Scotch.

## MR. GLADSTONE'S HOME RULE BILL

### House of Commons, April 9, 1886

[The Bill for the better government of Ireland was introduced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on April 8. On the following day Mr. Chamberlain rose to make the customary statement of his reasons for resigning his office, and the following is an extract from his speech on that occasion.]

. . . In what direction, then, do I think the solution is to be found? It has been assumed in some quarters that I am pedantically devoted to some plan of national councils, of which a good deal was heard some six months ago. That is a mistake. My right honourable friend will bear me out when I say that I did not think it worth while, in the face of the

much greater, much more complete, much more important proposal which he made even to offer one word in favour of national councils. The notion of national councils was started to meet a different state of things and a different problem. It was started in connection with a scheme for a thorough municipal government in Ireland, and in connection with that I think it was a very good notion. But it has at the present moment one fatal defect—if honourable members opposite were at any time disposed to give it their consideration they are no longer willing to do so; they reject it; and under those circumstances Heaven forfend that any English party should attempt to impose that benefit upon them. The question is now different. At the time when I thought there was something in the idea of a national council as affording a vent to a great deal of political activity in Ireland, my proposals were considered too extreme by some of my colleagues, who have now been successful in making them too moderate. Those national councils I, for one, am not likely to put forward again. I no longer regard that scheme as a solution, and I confess that after the speech of my right honourable friend, after the fact that a most important proportion of one of the great parties in the State has been willing at all events to entertain the proposal of the right honourable gentleman, it is only a very large proposal which can at any future time be accepted as a solution of this vast question. I should look for the solution in the direction of the principle of federation. My right honourable friend has rather looked for his model to the relations between this country and her self-governing and practically independent colonies. I think that that is of doubtful expediency. The present connection between our colonies and ourselves is no doubt very strong, owing to the affection which exists between members of the same nation. But it is a sentimental tie only. It is rather curious that my right honourable friend should have looked in this direction just at the moment when between the colonies and this country there is a general desire to draw tighter the bonds which unite us and to bring the whole Empire into one federation. I can hardly bring myself to

believe that the honourable member for Cork looks with entire satisfaction upon a proposal which will substitute such a connection as that which exists between Canada and this country—a connection which might be broken to-morrow if there were the slightest desire on the part of Canada to terminate it, because no one would think of employing force in order to tie any reluctant self-governing colony in continued bonds to this country—I think the honourable member for Cork would hardly like to see a tie of that kind substituted for that which at present exists. At all events, if he would he would differ from many distinguished Irishmen who have preceded him. I will not quote some of the great orators of a past generation ; but I will quote Mr. Butt, who, speaking ten years ago in this House, said :

'He, for one, was not willing to give up his share in the power and government of that Empire, and really since the Union he did not see how it was possible to give it up. Since the Union the wars which had brought possessions to England had been carried on by the spending of Irish treasure and the shedding of Irish blood. India had been won by the British Empire in the same way, and Ireland had acquired with England partnership rights which it would be impossible to distribute, and of which Ireland could only have her share by continuing to be represented in that House.'

It may be that Mr. Butt's views are rather antiquated at this time ; but I would refer to an opinion of a distinguished member of the party opposite. I mean the honourable member for Sligo (Mr. Sexton), who, speaking at Dublin the other day, said :

'If we do not retain a voice in Imperial affairs and keep part and parcel of the Imperial Parliament, the country will be degraded to the position of a province.' Well, that is what Irish members are asked to agree to under the scheme of my right honourable friend. It appears to me that the advantage of a system of federation is that Ireland might under it really remain an integral portion of the Empire. The action of such a scheme is centripetal and not centrifugal, and it is

in the direction of federation that the democratic movement has made most advances in the present century. My right honourable friend has referred to foreign precedents, but surely they are all against him. He did not refer to united Italy. In Italy different nations, different States, which have had independent existences for centuries, have been welded together. Even where federation has been adopted it has always been in the case of federating States which were previously separate. It has been intended to bring nations together, to lessen their causes of difference, and to draw them more closely in a common union. Take the case of Germany, for instance. Germany has been united upon a system of federation which has brought together nations long separated. Take the great case—the greatest case of all—of the United States of America. You have there the greatest democracy the world has ever seen and a democracy which has known how to fight in order to maintain its union. It has fought for, and triumphantly maintained, the Imperial union of the United States, but it has known also how to respect all local differences. Yes, sir, I remember that in the time of its greatest crisis, when it was in the most terrible moment of its fate, my right honourable friend counselled the disintegration of the United States.

MR. GLADSTONE: I did not counsel it.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: My right honourable friend says he did not counsel it; but he gave the weight of his great name to the statement that the Northern and Southern States had become separate nations. Well, sir, no one doubted at that time the sincerity of my right honourable friend or the purity of his motives. Nobody doubts them now, but everybody will admit—I dare say my right honourable friend himself would admit—that in that view of the situation in the United States he made a mistake.

MR. GLADSTONE: Hear, hear.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: Are you certain he is not making a mistake again? Well, sir, I say that in my view the solution of this question should be sought in some form of federation which would really maintain the Imperial unity, and which

would at the same time conciliate the desire for a national local government which is felt so strongly by the constituents of honourable members opposite. I do not say that we should imitate the great models to which I have referred. Our constitution and the circumstances of the case are different. I say I believe that it is on these lines, not on the lines of our relations with self-governing colonies, that it is possible to find a solution of the difficulty. I have now only to thank the House for the indulgence which it has given to me. I regret that my explanation has been necessarily to some extent incomplete. I have, however, said sufficient to put the House in possession of the main reasons why I have ceased to be a Minister of the Crown. Sir, there are some persons, servile partisans, who disgrace political life, who say that I have been guilty of treachery because I have resigned an office which I could no longer hold with honour. What would these men have been entitled to say of me if, holding the opinions that I do, which I expressed before joining the Government, and which I have expressed to-day, I had remained on that bench pretending to serve my country with a lie upon my lips? I do not assume, Heaven knows I do not pretend, to dogmatise on a question of this kind. I do not say that I am right in the conclusion at which I have arrived; I do not presume to condemn those who honestly differ from me: but of one thing I am certain—that I should have been guilty of an incredible shame and baseness if I had clung to place and office in support of a policy which in my heart I believe to be injurious to the best interests of Ireland and Great Britain.

## THE FATE OF THE HOME RULE BILL: THE CANADIAN ANALOGY

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 1, 1886

[In announcing this decision Mr. Chamberlain examined the much-quoted analogue of Canada, and put forward an alternative scheme on the lines of the Canadian Constitution. Certain minor alterations in the Home Rule Bill, offered by Mr. Gladstone at a meeting of the Liberal party at the Foreign Office, had seemed to the Liberal Unionists to be inadequate, and they decided to vote against the second reading.]

. . . UPON this question of finality I want to say a word upon a matter which has been referred to very often in this debate. It is most important and interesting as an illustration.

I refer to the case of Canada. It is curious that in the case of Canada you can find a precedent for almost every point which has been raised in the course of this debate. The Prime Minister referred to the case of Canada, and I think I state his argument correctly when I say that he considered the condition of Canada in 1838, before the rebellion, might be looked to as analogous to the condition of Ireland now; it was a condition of great discontent and of agitation which culminated in actual rebellion. Then he went on to say that the reforms granted to Canada had produced the pacification of the country, and I think, in his mind at all events, he compared the reforms of Lord Durham with the present Bill, and he argued that it would do for Ireland what Lord Durham's reforms did for Canada. Now that, I think, was the position of the Prime Minister. But I confess—having read very carefully the history of that time by more than one authority—that I think it points to a totally different conclusion. My view I will state in a sentence. My view is that Lower Canada—I will not deal with Upper Canada, which is another matter—was really in 1838 in very much the same condition as Ireland will be if this Bill is passed, and that the reforms of Lord Durham are the further reforms which we shall

have to grant after this Bill is passed in order to secure the pacification of Ireland. What was the position of Lower Canada? It was a country inhabited by two peoples—two races—of two religions. The great majority were French Catholics, and there was a very energetic, strenuous minority of British settlers who were Protestants. There was a constitution under which Canada contributed nothing to Imperial expenditure, and had no part in Imperial policy. There was a constitution which gave Canada a legislative assembly which was returned by the majority, who were the dominant party in it. There was a legislative council which was curiously analogous, not exactly in detail, but in effect, to the first order in this Bill, and which was a nominated council, nominated in order to secure the representation of the Protestant minority and give them an effective veto over the proceedings of the popular and legislative chamber. That was the state of things, and that is curiously like what the state of things would be in Ireland under this Bill. The revenues of Canada were of three kinds—taxes levied previous to 1774, taxes levied after 1774, and there were the hereditary revenues of the Crown. Canada had power only over the taxes since 1774, and the first complaint made, as it would be the first complaint under this Bill, was that the Canadian Legislature was not entrusted with the control of its own finances. A demand was made to the British Parliament that they should give up to the control of the Lieutenant-Governor all taxes which had been levied previous to 1774. That demand was extorted from the British Parliament under the threat of rebellion and agitation. But the concession of that demand did not stop the agitation. The Canadians went on demanding the control of the hereditary revenue, and, in fact, the full control of the whole revenues of the provinces, and they asked for more—they asked that the Legislative Council should be done away with, that it should be made elective and elected practically under the same conditions as the popular body, and, in fact, that all the arrangements for the protection of the minority should be done away with.

Now that is exactly parallel to what I anticipate under this Bill. You will have to give to Ireland all the reforms granted after Lord Durham's Act; you will have to give them their practical independence, because there is no use denying the fact that at this moment the self-governing colony of Canada is practically independent. The Dominion Parliament has only to pass a resolution desiring to cast off its allegiance, and there is not a man in this House who will hold up his hand against it. Therefore, we see, first, inadequate concessions, then a demand for greater concessions, then entire separation. It is a fatal decline. There is no finality in this Bill, and until you come to separation you cannot possibly stop or satisfy the demands represented by those honourable members on the benches opposite.

I have one other word to say about Canada. It has been made a constant demand upon us that we should produce a plan. Yes, honourable members from Ireland opposite are very anxious indeed about the details of our plan. I paid attention to the demand made in this connection by the Prime Minister, and I endeavoured with great submission to suggest the alternative lines on which it seemed to me that we should have proceeded. The result was not very encouraging. Our attempt to meet the wish which was expressed has been hailed with ridicule; we have been told that our plan is 'Popkin's plan,' and we are described as 'puny whipsters' by the honourable and learned member for South Derry. It is all very well for the honourable member, with his magnificent physique, to stigmatise as puny whipsters men not endowed by Providence with his great personal gifts, but it is very hard upon us that we should be accused of arrogance and presumption and self-conceit because we endeavoured honestly to meet the demand made upon us by the Prime Minister for an alternative scheme. But now I will give you our alternative scheme in even greater detail, though it will not add much to your information. You may find—I will not say the details—but the lines of such a plan in the present Constitution of Canada; not, however, in the relations between Canada

and this country,—those are the wrong lines, and lines against which I protest, and which mean separation,—but in the relations *inter se* of the provinces of Canada and the Dominion Parliament. Those are the relations which I, for one, am perfectly prepared to establish to-morrow between this country and Ireland. Let us see what the differences are. In the first place, there is that question of Ulster. Some one in the course of this debate referred to the Constitution of 1840, which united the two provinces of Canada. Yes, but the union did not answer; it led to quarrels, to agitation, to irritation, and even violence; and in 1865 the Constitution was changed and these provinces separated. Now they have each their separate autonomy, under the authority of the Dominion Parliament. In that way you might have provincial assemblies in Ireland, under the authority of the Imperial Parliament. Then, again, in the Dominion Parliament there is complete and continuous representation of every part of the Dominion. They are represented proportionately according to their numbers; they are represented continuously and fully. In the third place, there is absolute and effective supremacy of the Dominion Parliament over the provincial legislatures. There is a veto which can be and is used; there is a right of concurrent legislation which can be and is used; and the provincial assemblies are subordinate bodies, with distinctly defined rights of legislation expressly given to them by statute. Those are great differences, but there is another difference, one of detail, but not of small importance—the legislation as to criminal law and procedure. Where does it rest in Canada? Not with the local assemblies, but with the Dominion Parliament. And the judges of the land, by whom are they appointed, and to whom are they responsible? They are appointed by the Governor-General, and paid by the Dominion Parliament. In that way the judges of Canada are independent, and are not likely to be affected by local influence, which might prevail in smaller and subordinate bodies.

Well, sir, I think I have occupied the time of the House

long enough—longer than I intended, but I hope that, at all events, I have made my position clear. I do not want to be in the least mistaken by honourable members from Ireland on the benches opposite, or by any one else, as to the opinions I hold, and which are identical with those which I have written and expressed before on many occasions. It will appear to the House that my objections to the Bill as it stands are unchanged. I cannot see that the amendments which have been suggested by the Prime Minister would meet those objections in any considerable measure; therefore I feel it my duty to vote against the second reading. We are threatened with a dissolution; a dissolution has no terrors for me. Of one thing I am confident, and I know something about the matter—that the Unionist majority in this House will be strengthened. I am very sorry that this Parliament, from which so much was expected, should have had but a brief and barren existence, but I am glad that this great issue, having been raised, is to be submitted to the only tribunal whose decision we can all accept and which is competent to pronounce it. We also appeal to Cæsar. I was told the other night by the honourable member for the Irish ward in Liverpool—I beg pardon, the Irish Division—that the British democracy were going to give a unanimous vote in favour of this Bill. I do not recognise the honourable member as any authority on the British democracy; he may be an authority on the Irish democracy,—although I do not think that he resides very much in that country himself—but for the British democracy he is not entitled to speak. There is one admission I will make. Two things have become clear during the controversy which has taken place: one is that the British democracy has a passionate devotion to the Prime Minister—a devotion earned and deserved by fifty years of public service, and that sentiment is as honourable to him as it is to those who feel and express it. But there is another thing which has also come out—that is, the sentiment—the universality and completeness of which, I dare say, has taken many of us by surprise—in favour of

some form of Home Rule to Ireland, which will give to the Irish people some greater control over their own affairs. On these two things I believe the British democracy is practically unanimous, but they are not unanimous as to the methods by which it has been sought to establish this principle. Any one who will look to the resolutions of Liberal Associations, any one who will read the speeches of prominent Radicals and Liberals, will see that there is the greatest difference of opinion as to the particular provisions of this Bill, and hardly any one approves of it unreservedly. Most of them take the same objections which I have been urging. It is upon the method and plan of the Bill that we are going to the country, and not upon its principle. I have said before, and I say it again, give me the principle without the Bill and I will vote for it. But I will not vote for the method by which it is sought to establish the principle. But we are going to the country, and I hope that we shall go in a more amiable temper than has recently been displayed in some quarters.

I have been myself assailed with extraordinary bitterness because I have exercised an independent judgment in a matter which I believe to be vital to the interests of the country. I have been told that I am animated by personal spite and private spleen. Yes; I do not complain of honourable members from Ireland taking that view and expressing it—it is their habit of controversy. No one has ever been opposed to them in politics but he has been covered with virulent abuse and misrepresentation, and none more conspicuously than Lord Spencer and the Prime Minister, whom they are now loading with fulsome adulation. But I address myself to my honourable friends round me, from whom I have the misfortune to differ. I ask them to consider whether it is really necessary to impute the basest motives to public men at a time when there are on the surface reasons perfectly honourable which may sufficiently account for their conduct. Do you say—do you dare to say—that my right honourable friend and colleague in the representation of Birmingham is animated by personal

spleen and spite? He takes the same course as I do; he is going into the lobby against this Bill and against the friend, the associate, and the leader whom he has followed with loyal devotion for many years of his life. My right honourable friend has done as great services, he has lived almost as long in public life, as the Prime Minister himself, and no one has doubted his honour. But you say that I am in a different position. And why do you say that? What I am saying now I expressed in public—it is in print—before the General Election, before I was a member of the Government, before I had the slightest conception that any idea of this kind was fermenting then—if it were fermenting—in the mind of the Prime Minister. I spoke at Warrington in September 1885, and, referring to the demands of the honourable member for Cork, I said then that if there were any party or any man who was willing to yield to those demands in order to purchase his support I would have no part in the competition. And then many of my friends whom I see around me thanked me in public for what they thought that plain, frank, and courageous declaration. And now, forsooth, for having made the same declaration some three months later, when the occasion has arisen, they accuse me of personal and unworthy motives. Sir, the charge is unjust, and the charge is ridiculous. For there is not a man here who does not know that every personal and political interest would lead me to cast in my lot with the Prime Minister. Why, sir, not a day passes in which I do not receive dozens or scores of letters urging me for my own sake to vote for the Bill, and to 'dish the Whigs.' Well, sir, the temptation is no doubt a great one, but after all I am not base enough to serve my personal ambition by betraying my country; and I am convinced that when the heat of this discussion is passed Liberals will not judge harshly those who have pursued what they honestly believed to be the path of duty, even although it may lead to the disruption of party ties and to the loss of the influence and power which it is the legitimate ambition of every man to seek among his political friends and associates.

## A MEETING WITH CONSTITUENTS

### Birmingham, April 21, 1886

[The Annual Meeting of the Birmingham Liberal Association—'The Two Thousand'—was held in the Town Hall. There was a very large attendance. Mr. Chamberlain, in the official language of the occasion, attended the meeting by invitation, to deliver an address upon Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule and Land Bills. In the result, Mr. Chamberlain lost the support of the Caucus, but retained, in increased fullness, the support of Birmingham.]

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Whatever view this meeting of the representatives of this great constituency may take on the subject which has called us together, I am convinced that upon one point we shall all be agreed, and that no one will underestimate the gravity and the importance of the discussion to which we are invited. On the one hand, we have the venerable and trusted leader of the Liberal party, who invites us to consider the scheme which he believes will put an end to that perennial Irish difficulty which has been the anxiety, and almost the despair, of politicians for so many years; and, on the other hand, we have also to consider that if by any chance he should now be mistaken, if we should be over-sanguine, over-hasty, in accepting his views, we shall take a step that we cannot retrace, which may be disastrous to the interests of the United Kingdom, and which may lessen, if it does not destroy, the power and the influence of that mighty Empire which has been built up and left to us as a heritage by our forefathers, and which has done so much to promote the civilisation and the freedom of the world. Gentlemen, we have often discussed important questions on this platform. We have discussed the reform of the land laws, the provision for national education; we have discussed the question of Church establishment, and the question of the extension of popular liberties; but on all those occasions we have been discussing questions which may fairly be considered as within the limits of the State. Now we are called upon to face a question upon

which a wrong decision may imperil the existence of the State itself. I am very glad to have the opportunity which is afforded to me by our brief recess to confer with you, my friends and fellow-townsmen, whose sympathy and support has been afforded to me on so many occasions, and has given me strength in times of difficulty and anxiety, whose Liberalism no one has ever been bold enough to call in question, and whose judgment I have hitherto always been able cordially to accept. I thought in the first instance of appealing to those who are in a special sense my own constituents—my friends in West Birmingham. But it was urged upon me that I had not ceased to be one of the members for Birmingham, and that I might, without presumption and without any slight to those who have been good enough to return me to Parliament, address myself to you—the representatives of the whole of what was once my constituency.

There is one other observation which I should like to make, by way of preface, before I come to the main subject of our discussion. I have said that we are discussing a matter which may concern the existence of the State. After that it may seem a small thing to say that upon our right conduct of this controversy depends the existence of the Liberal party as a great and potent force in the political life of the future. That is not a small matter to me. Fifteen or sixteen years ago I was drawn into politics by my interest in social questions, and by my desire to promote the welfare of the great majority of the population. At that time I saw the great majority—the masses of industrious, thrifty, hard-working artisans and labourers—condemned by bad laws, and by the neglect of their rulers, to a life of exacting toil, without the advantages and opportunities which education affords, and borne down by conditions which I thought to be unfair and unjust; and I looked to the Liberal party as the means for removing and remedying those grievances, as the great instrument of progress and reform, and from that time to this I have done everything that an individual can do—I have made sacrifices of money, and time, and labour, I have made sacrifices of my opinions, to maintain the

organisation and to preserve the unity of the Liberal party. And even now, in this time of discouragement and anxiety, when personal friendships and political ties are breaking down under the strain of the dissensions which have been raised amongst us, I entreat of you to so continue this discussion that when this time of trial is past we may once more unite, without embittered memories, without unkind reflections, to carry forward the great work upon which hitherto we have been absolutely unanimous.

Gentlemen, surely it is the very irony of fate that we should be here to-night to discuss a question which I will venture to say never entered into our thoughts or anticipations a few months ago, when we were engaged in the General Election. It is not very long ago since I was addressing you in this hall. I was congratulating you upon our success in Birmingham, upon our comparative success throughout the country, and upon the hopes which then burned in my breast that shortly we should see some considerable progress made towards the amelioration of the condition of the people, towards the solution of those great social problems which had excited our interest and our sympathy. I do not believe there was a man amongst us at that time who thought that in a few short weeks all these matters would be relegated to the dim and distant future—that we should be absorbed in this vast problem of reconstituting and remodelling the arrangements between the three kingdoms which constitute the British Empire. What has produced this great change in the situation? There is nothing new, there is nothing that was unexpected, in the condition of Ireland. There has been no popular demand in England or in Scotland. No; let us recognise the fact. The whole change is due to the force of character, to the determination and to the courage, of one illustrious man, and although I regret the object for which these qualities have been displayed, I will say to you that never before has my admiration for them been so sincere and profound. But just think what is the nature of the change which has thus been effected. For eighty-six years the question of the repeal of the Union

has been a matter of agitation in Ireland. It has been a fitful agitation, sinking or swelling with the changing condition of Irish politics and of Irish social problems. But during the whole of that period no English statesman has been found, including even the present Prime Minister,—no statesman has been found who has regarded this agitation as otherwise than sentimental; as being, that is to say, the expression of discontent with existing legislation, but not the fixed idea of the people of Ireland. I do not believe that there has been any Radical, any Liberal, of note who has hitherto—until very recently indeed—doubted that with the removal of the material grievances of Ireland this desire for separation would cease and die away. But now all this is changed, and it is changed just at the time when a Parliament has been elected strengthened by an infusion of democratic influence and feeling, and more ready than any Parliament that has ever existed to do justice to Ireland, to secure equality—to secure absolute equality—between the three kingdoms, to remove every grievance against which a reasonable complaint could be set up. Yet at this time we are asked to embark on a new order of ideas. We are asked once for all to give up the hope which I confess I have ever cherished, that in the course of time, with fairness, kindness, and, above all, justice, a policy of reconciliation pursued consistently by the Imperial Parliament might unite Ireland with Great Britain in bonds as firm and as close as those which now unite Scotland to England. All this we have to surrender, and we are asked to seek relief from present difficulties by giving up the hope of closer union, and to look for it in a loosening, if not in a severance, of the bonds which have hitherto held the peoples together. Well, gentlemen, unless you have changed very much— ('You have.') No; I have not changed. What I say now with pain and grief I have said with your assent and approval, ever since I have been in public life; and I say that unless you have changed, this new view of the situation is a hard saying, and almost a humiliation.

There is only one person who can regard the situation—

only one person in the three kingdoms who can regard the situation with unmixed satisfaction—only one person who has no past to appeal to which is inconsistent with his present opinions, and that is the distinguished leader of the Nationalist party in Ireland, the uncrowned king, Mr. Parnell. Gentlemen, you all know that I have never, either in public or private, spoken with other than respect of Mr. Parnell. I believe him to be sincere and patriotic. I think very often he has been mistaken in his course; but at least I give him credit for perfect honesty of purpose, and I recognise in him a man who knows his own mind, who has stated his desires and demands again and again, and who has never withdrawn one jot from the position he has taken up. And now, when we are asked to consider the possibility of a final settlement of the Irish question, it becomes of more than ordinary importance that we should see what it is that the Irish people, through Mr. Parnell, have asked for. I could take, I think, almost every speech that Mr. Parnell has made haphazard during the last five or six years, and I could find repeated again and again the views that he has put forward. I will, however, call your attention to two of those speeches, which seem to me to put the position in a nutshell. In the first place, here is an extract from a speech which Mr. Parnell delivered at Cincinnati on February 23, 1880; he was speaking to the Irish-Americans, and he said: 'None of us, whether in America or in Ireland, or wherever we may be, will be satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England.' That is a policy which Mr. Parnell has consistently pursued. My next quotation will show you also what are the methods by which he has pursued it. I have said that as far as I know he has never varied in the slightest degree in the character or extent of his demands, but I am bound to say he has varied very much in his opinion of certain prominent statesmen. You will see from the quotation that I am about to give you that he did not always speak of Mr. Gladstone with the respect and admiration which I am glad to think he now sincerely feels

for him. This is from a speech which was delivered at Wexford on October 10, 1881. Mr. Parnell said: 'He (Mr. Gladstone) would have you to believe that he is not afraid of you, because he has disarmed you, because he has attempted to disorganise you, because he knows that the Irish nation is disarmed so far as physical weapons go. But he does not hold this kind of language with the Boers. . . . Although he has attempted to regain some of his lost position with the Transvaal by subsequent chicanery and diplomatic negotiations, yet that sturdy and small people in the distant Transvaal have seen through William Ewart Gladstone, and have told him again for the second time that they will not have their liberties filched from them; and I believe that, as a result, we shall see that William Ewart Gladstone will again yield to the people of the Transvaal; and I trust that as the result of this great movement we shall see that, just as Gladstone, by his Land Act of 1881, has eaten his own words, and has departed from all his formerly declared principles, now we shall see that these brave words of this English Prime Minister will be scattered as chaff before the united and advancing determination of the Irish people to regain for themselves their lost land and their lost legislative independence.' Well, gentlemen, I have said that I could point probably to almost any speech which has been delivered in recent times, up to the very meeting of Parliament, by Mr. Parnell in confirmation of the views which are expressed in the extracts which I have read to you. I ask you whether there is any man among you who believes any settlement of the Irish question will be permanent which does not yield the full demands of Mr. Parnell, which does not enable him to 'break the last link which holds Ireland to Great Britain,' which does not give him full control of the land of Ireland, and does not make Ireland absolute master of its own legislative independence? We have heard, in the course of the discussions in the House of Commons, the argument used that if we do not concede the wishes of the Irish people, as expressed by their representatives in Parliament, we shall have once more an out-

burst of outrage and violence in Ireland, and that even here in England we shall be subjected to the nefarious proceedings of assassins and dynamiters. That is a cowardly and a mean argument, and it ought not to be addressed to Englishmen by Englishmen ; but I only refer to it in passing in order to point out to you that the argument applies equally to any proposal which does not meet the full demands of Mr. Parnell ; it applies to any proposal which does not give to him the absolute legislative independence of his country.

Let us then proceed to consider how far the Bill, which is before us, for the better government of Ireland fulfils the conditions which Mr. Parnell has laid down. Only if it fulfils those conditions can you or I hope that it will be a permanent settlement. If it be not a permanent settlement, we shall very soon have the Irish problem upon us again in all its complications, and in all its difficulties—ay, into the distant future. Now, what is the proposal ? The proposal is—That there shall be established in Dublin a Parliament representative of the Irish people. At the same time it is proposed that Ireland should be deprived of all representation in the English Parliament. I am speaking of the Bill. Some gentleman says, 'No.' If he has read the Bill, he will find that I am perfectly accurate. By the Bill it is proposed that all representation of Irishmen in the Imperial Parliament shall cease. Henceforth Ireland is to have no part in the foreign and colonial affairs of this great and mighty Empire, which Irishmen have done so much to build up. It is to have no share in the control of the army and navy, to which Ireland has given so many brave and valiant sons. It is to have no part in any matter relating to trade or navigation, and to a number of minor matters which henceforth are to be decided, so far as Ireland is concerned, in the Parliament which will then, indeed, be a foreign Parliament, since not a single Irish representative will find a place in it. Well, that is not all. This Imperial Parliament is henceforth to be sole judge and arbiter in the matter of all taxation concerned with excise and customs.

It is to fix the amount and character of that taxation. It is to deal with three-fourths of the taxation revenue of Ireland, and the Irish people are to have no voice at all. Does my friend in the gallery say that that is as it ought to be? Does he call himself a Liberal? Does he pretend to be a Radical when he approves of a system which would tax the Irish people to three-fourths of the whole revenue of the country, and give them absolutely no representation in the Parliament which levies these imposts? But the Bill does more than this. It imposes on the Irish people a Constitution which, I venture to say, is absolutely odious and hateful to every true Liberal. It would be repudiated with scorn in this country. It is contrary to all the practice, to all the principles, of our representative government. There is to be an assembly with two orders. Life peers are to be *ex-officio* members of that assembly; a third of the body are to be elected with a property qualification, and by electors who are also to have a property qualification, and then this privileged minority of one-third of the new assembly is to have an absolute veto for a limited time over all the proceedings of the majority of popularly elected representatives. Surely this is an extraordinary arrangement to be proposed by a Liberal to a democratic Parliament. Why is it so proposed? Because, it appears that these safeguards and restrictions are necessary under the scheme of the Bill to give protection to minorities, who cannot otherwise be trusted to a popularly elected Parliament in Dublin. Now, gentlemen, I ask you seriously, as sensible men, do you believe that an arrangement of that kind is going to be permanent? Do you believe that that is a final settlement of the question between Ireland and Great Britain? Do you believe that any free people worthy of the name would submit for long to such miserable restrictions upon their liberty and their representative authority? Let me bring it home to you by a domestic illustration. Suppose we were considering in this room to-night the desirability of conceding local government to Birmingham, and suppose that the proposition made to us was that we

might have a town council to govern our local affairs, provided that, in the first instance, we gave up our parliamentary representation; that, in the next place, we were to allow the whole of the borough rate and half of the improvement rate to be settled as to its amount and to be collected by Sir William Harcourt, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Suppose we were asked to leave the defence of our families and our houses to a police force governed by Mr. Childers as Home Secretary. Suppose that if any difficulties arose between us and neighbouring local authorities, we were expected to see them decided, without reference to us, by Mr. Stansfeld, as President of the Local Government Board. Suppose, then, that the town council was to include amongst its members magistrates as *ex-officio* life-members. Suppose that aldermen were elected by £20 householders, and were required to possess a heavy property qualification. And suppose, lastly, that this privileged minority had a veto given them on every act and every resolution which might be passed by their popularly elected colleagues. I ask you whether you would not resent such an offer as an insult. You would not pick it up from the gutter. You would do anything rather than submit to such a degradation. But, then, gentlemen, under those circumstances, how is it that there are some people who are sanguine enough to suppose that the Irish nation will accept a precisely similar arrangement as a final settlement of their claims for legislative independence. It is ridiculous. If these proposals are accepted at all, they are accepted only as an instalment. They will be a justification for further demands. You have not to consider these safeguards and restrictions; you have to consider whether you will accept what will undoubtedly follow when these restrictions and these safeguards are removed, and Ireland becomes an independent and a foreign country, and the integrity of the Empire becomes an empty name. I do not know whether you have seen the speech which was delivered last night by Mr. Davitt at a public meeting. I have for Mr. Davitt the greatest respect. I believe him to be a man—a really honest and sincere

patriot, who has been led into this agitation by his knowledge of the privations which his poorer countrymen have endured, by his desire to raise them to a higher level. In all that he has done, not perhaps in all his methods, but in his objects, I have the deepest and the most earnest sympathy. But Mr. Davitt, speaking last night, said that he had been asked whether Irishmen would be satisfied with these arrangements, and whether they would accept them as a permanent settlement of the question. He said that was as unreasonable as to ask him after he had had his breakfast to refrain from demanding his dinner and his supper. I sympathise with Mr. Davitt.[1] But, gentlemen, do not be led astray. It is not the breakfast alone that you will concede if you accept these proposals; you will have very shortly a demand for the dinner and the supper. And, believe me, you will not be able to resist it.

I have hitherto spoken of this Bill entirely from the point of view of Irish interests. Now look at it for a moment from the point of view of the interests of the United Kingdom. What is going to happen under this brand-new Constitution? Suppose, unfortunately, we get involved in a war with a great continental power. You may think that that is improbable. But remember it was only a few months ago, under the leadership of the present Prime Minister, who I verily believe is a most ardent lover of peace, more anxious than any Prime Minister that has preceded him to avoid international complications, yet, even under his pacific leadership, we were on the eve of a great struggle with Russia, which might have strained the resources of the Empire to the uttermost.

If that happens again, where shall we be? what will be the position of the various members of the so-called United Kingdom? England may be struggling for its very existence; it may be in the throes of death; but Ireland will be unconcerned. I am speaking only of the Constitution. Under

[1] Mr. Davitt subsequently wrote to the papers to say that this illustration did not apply to the situation of that day, but had reference to the position of Irishmen after the Land Act of 1881.

the new Constitution she will be unaffected. No call can be made upon her for assistance or for aid. She will have no voice in the policy which has brought us into conflict; she will have no part in the contest itself; she will have no share in the pecuniary burdens which it may involve. She is asked to provide a fixed contribution that is settled upon a peace estimate of the cost of the army and the navy. When that is provided, her responsibility will cease; she will have no further obligation, no further concern. Well, that may be all right. These are the new ideas. But it is inconsistent, in my judgment, with what we have always been taught by the leaders that we have hitherto followed and revered. In the manifesto which Mr. Gladstone addressed to the electors of the United Kingdom at the time of the General Election, he laid down conditions which in his judgment were paramount, and which must be fulfilled before any concession could be made of local government to Ireland. These conditions were—the union of the three kingdoms and the integrity of the Empire to be preserved; that the supremacy of the Crown and the supremacy of Imperial Parliament should be maintained. I confess I have looked at this matter over and over again, and Heaven knows I have desired, if I possibly could, to find ground of agreement with the leader whom, hitherto at any rate, I have always loyally followed. I say I cannot admit that the conditions laid down by him are fulfilled by an arrangement under which, in the case of a great war, Ireland, although perhaps subject indirectly to the consequences of the struggle, would yet have no part whatever in the contest, no share whatever in the burden which it might involve.

There is one other point which I wish to put before you in reference to the Bill for the better government of Ireland. In the debate on the introduction, my friend Sir William Harcourt, in a speech which was very witty, very amusing, and very good-tempered, said, among other things, that he thought he detected an Orange flavour in the arguments which I used. Well, I do not think—no man knows himself—but I do not think that I have any sympathy whatever

with bigotry, whether it is exhibited by the Orangemen of the North or by the Roman Catholics in the South. But, on the other hand, I cannot blind myself to the facts of the situation. We have been accustomed, perhaps a little too much, to talk of Ireland as if it were one people. There are two nations in Ireland, two communities, separated by religion, by race, by politics, by social conditions. There are in Ireland at this moment something like one and a quarter million of Protestants, most of them in the province of Ulster, a great number in Dublin, and others scattered up and down the country in little groups, everywhere marking their existence by becoming the centre of honest, praiseworthy industry and enterprise. This minority—it is not a small one, it is one quarter of the whole population—through good repute and evil repute has been loyal to the British connection. It has been industrious, and it has been prosperous. Now, they are bitterly opposed to this scheme, and, rightly or wrongly, although under the protection of the British Government, they have lived on terms of amity with their Roman Catholic neighbours, they believe that their property, their religion—ay, even their lives—could not safely be trusted to a Nationalist Parliament in Dublin. Well, for my part, I hate coercion, and I am not disposed to coerce these men by British soldiers. I am not prepared to disregard altogether their wishes and their feelings. I think that they are entitled to some consideration from the British power that they have hitherto uniformly supported. We are asked now to pledge the credit of the British nation to the extent, as I shall show you directly, of £150,000,000 for the benefit of the Irish landlords, who, as Mr. Gladstone himself has shown in the speech which he made in introducing the Land Purchase Bill, have not always had a blameless record in the past. We are told that this enormous liability is a duty laid upon us by the misdeeds of our ancestors—that it is an obligation of honour. But, then, is there no obligation of honour to this great Protestant minority of one and a quarter millions, who, at all events in recent times, have never committed any act of oppression,

who have never lent themselves to violence or disorder, whose patient industry has contributed more to the prosperity of Ireland than all the agitators that ever lived, and who even now are giving, in the shape of taxation, in the shape of enterprise, in the shape of all that can come from enlightened citizenship, as much as all the rest of the population put together ?

I pass on to consider briefly the provisions of the Land Purchase Bill, to which I have already had occasion to refer. We are told that this Bill is inseparable from the other—that it is an essential part of the policy of the Government. Why is it inseparable ? Because Mr. Gladstone and the Government feel that they cannot in honour leave the interests of a small minority, who have become objects of dislike to a considerable portion of the population, to a popularly elected body. But if that is so, I confess I do not see why other minorities are not also entitled to protection. There is the Protestant minority, of which I have already spoken ; there are the commercial classes ; there are the large farmers —any section of the population which for any reason has become an object of envy or dislike ought not to be handed over without security to the control of a triumphant majority, as to which even those who propose to invest them with this almost unlimited power are obliged to confess their apprehensions and their suspicions. But I want to consider this second Bill rather from the point of view of the British taxpayer. I ask you—you, the representatives of a great industrial community, many of you earning your livelihood by the toil of your own hands—are you willing to pay this vast price for the repeal of the Union ? Are you ready at this time of depression, when, for my part, I can see no rift in the clouds, are you willing to anticipate the resources of the country, which may yet be wanted at no distant date to relieve the misery of a suffering people ? Let us look at two points of the greatest importance. What is the liability in which we are asked to involve ourselves ? What is the security which we are asked to take ? What is the liability ? I was very glad the other night to hear Mr. Gladstone say

that, after considering the objections which I had urged while I was in the Cabinet, he had come to the conclusion that it was desirable to limit the liability, and that he had accordingly reduced the amount of Consols to be issued from £113,000,000 to £50,000,000. I was very glad, I say, to hear that; but I have been thinking it over ever since, and the more I think of it the more I am convinced that the reduction is perfectly illusory. The reduction is not owing to any alteration of the plan of the original Bill to which I objected. It is a mere alteration of the paper estimate of the amount which may ultimately be called for. I think I can make that clear to you. Mr. Gladstone offers by his Bill an option to every landlord in Ireland to sell his land on certain terms. If the landlords accept, it will not be £50,000,000, nor £113,000,000; it will be at least £150,000,000. It is quite true that the Bill only proposes a present issue of £50,000,000 of Consols, but the liability will remain. Parliament will be called upon hereafter to do honour to the obligations of the nation, and if more is required more will have to be found, and whether it is £5 that is wanted, or £5,000,000, or £150,000,000, will not depend, if this Bill is passed, upon us, upon Parliament, upon the English and Scottish people—it will depend upon a few hundred landlords in Ireland. If they accept the option, we are pledged, and we cannot escape from the obligation. I do not know whether they will accept it or not; I do not know whether they will think it a sufficiently advantageous offer. I should, if I were in their place. But one thing I am certain of, and that is, that if only a part of them take the option we shall have all the worst bargains.

And now let us look at the security for this operation. The security in the long run is the willingness and the ability of the people to pay the rents. Well, the payment of rent in Ireland has lately been rather a spasmodic performance; and really I do not see that it is probable or reasonable to expect that tenants will pay on a scale estimated at twenty years' purchase of the present rent at a time when their leaders are telling them, and have been telling them for

years, that five years', or three years' purchase would be ample for the value of the land. I think they are still more unlikely to pay, when they remember, or when somebody reminds them hereafter, that it has been fixed by a foreign authority, by the Parliament at Westminster, which at the same time has admitted its incompetency to deal with other Irish affairs. But that is not all. If you like to be hopeful, if you are more sanguine than I am, you may believe that the tenants will be willing to pay these rents extorted from them by the decision of the Parliament at Westminster, and against the opinions of all their trusted leaders. You may believe that, but then comes the question, will they be able to pay them ? These rents are fixed upon the basis of the judicial rent. The judicial rent was established before the recent reduction in produce. I am told that the reduction amounts to 20, 30, and 40 per cent. I do not believe we have touched the bottom ; I believe the reduction will go on. If the English farmers were sensible enough to open the ports of the kingdom to the cattle from the United States, to take them as store cattle, that would at once involve an enormous reduction in the price that is now being paid for Irish cattle, which alone are allowed to be introduced into the kingdom for that purpose at the present time. Well, if that reduction goes on, if it continues, as I anticipate it will, I believe there are many cases in which it will be impossible for the tenants to pay the existing rents ; and then what would happen ? Whether it be because they are unwilling, or whether it be that they are unable, it is not the landlord who will suffer. He will be spending the income, derived from British Consols, in London or Paris, at his fancy and according to his will. But the Irish Parliament, elected by these tenants, existing by their breath, will certainly be called upon, and cannot fail to repudiate the English tribute, and to refuse to pay more than a proportion, at any rate—if it pays anything—of the sum which is required as the interest and sinking fund of the debt that will have been created. And then what is your remedy ? Working men of England and Scotland, where is your

remedy? You will be Irish landlords. You will have to evict the tenants; you will have to collect your rents at the point of the bayonet. I refuse to be a party to any such contingency. Gentlemen, British credit, built up as it has been by past generations, is a precious reserve, to be held for times of need and necessity, and I will not anticipate it for the benefit of Irish landlords. We also have a land question in England. There is a land question in Scotland, there is a land question in Wales, and I am inclined to maintain these resources for cases which, I think, may be even more urgent and more deserving than those of the Irish landlords.

Gentlemen, these differences which I have endeavoured briefly, but I hope clearly, to explain to you, have compelled me to resign the office which I held in the Government. If you will believe me, I made a great sacrifice in giving up the opportunity that I thought I held in my hands to carry forward some of the questions in which I have felt a deep interest. I might, perhaps, have had the honour of introducing a Local Government Bill; of doing something to equalise the burdens of local taxation, which I think at the present time press most unfairly on some classes of the ratepayers. I might have done something to extend that municipal government in which I have always taken so great a pride, and so deep an interest. And, at the same time, I had hoped to provide opportunities for a happier and a better existence for the agricultural labourers, who are at once the most numerous and the most necessitous part of our artisan population. All these things I have surrendered with the deepest pain and regret, but with a sense of overwhelming duty and obligation. Perhaps I may be allowed to add a word or two as to my present position. I am afraid that the opposition which I feel to the proposals contained in the Land Purchase Bill cannot be met. I think the Bill is a bad one. I would sooner go out of politics altogether than give my vote to pledge the capital of the country, and the future earnings of every man and woman in the United Kingdom, in order to modify the opposition of a small class

of Irish proprietors to a scheme which, if it remains in its present form, will, I believe, infallibly lead to the separation of Ireland from England. I object in this case to the risk which we are asked to incur. I object also to the object for which we are asked to incur that risk. But as regards the Home Rule Bill, the Bill for the better government of Ireland, my opposition is only conditional. I regret very much that this great measure, involving so vast a change, such enormous risks,—so vitally affecting the welfare of the kingdom,—should have been brought before Parliament without more consultation with the other leaders of the Liberal party, and with the members of the Liberal party generally. I think the Bill would have benefited a good deal by fuller consideration, both in the Cabinet and in the country. But at the same time I admit that, having been introduced by so eminent a man as the Prime Minister, the question cannot be allowed to fall, the problem cannot be disregarded. The only question is as to the form which the Bill shall assume, and I think I can show you in a few words that if certain alterations were made all the anomalies which I have described to you, most of the objections which I have taken, would disappear. If, to begin with, the representation of Ireland at Westminster were maintained on its present footing—if Irishmen were allowed to vote and to speak on all subjects which were not specially referred to them at Dublin, then they would remain an integral part of this Imperial realm ; they would have their share in its privileges, and their responsibility for its burdens. In that case the Imperial Parliament would be able to maintain its control over Imperial taxation in Ireland, and for all Imperial purposes the Parliament at Westminster would speak for a United Kingdom. I should like to see the case of Ulster met in some form or other. I would be glad if it were found possible to concede to Ulster, having regard to the great distinctions which I have pointed out of race, and religion, and politics—I would be glad if there could be conceded to Ulster a separate assembly. And if these changes were made I think it would be altogether

unnecessary to maintain that long list of restrictions and safeguards, and minority representation, and curious electoral devices, which we have long ago repudiated in our own representative system. I am told by some of the more ardent advocates of the Bill that these are matters for Committee. No, gentlemen, they are matters which clearly affect and would modify the principle of the Bill. I am only a young parliamentary hand, but I have experience enough of the House of Commons to know that if we go into Committee without having secured some assurance from the Government that these or similar amendments will be accepted by them, we shall be beaten hopelessly in detail on every point by the superior force which the Government will in that case be able to bring against us. I hope, I sincerely hope, that Mr. Gladstone, who, I have no doubt, has all these matters fully before him—I hope, I say, that he will see his way to accept these modifications. If he does, if will be with real gratification and delight that I shall be found once more giving him whatever humble support I can. But if not, then my duty is clear, and at all hazards I will perform it. I am not going to enter any cave ; I am not going to join any coalition of discordant elements and parties ; but in the case I have mentioned I shall give an independent—but I hope also a perfectly frank and loyal—opposition to the measures which in my heart and conscience I believe, in their present form, would be disastrous and dangerous to the best interests of the United Kingdom.

Gentlemen, I have completed the statement which I undertook to make to you. I do not know whether you will agree or disagree with the views that I have expressed ; but I think that, knowing me as you do, at least I may be sure that you will appreciate the motives which have guided my action. If I have been fortunate enough in the past to win your confidence and support, it has been because you have known that I have been faithful and true to the trust which has been confided to me ; and you would justly despise and condemn me now if, for the sake of private interests and personal ambition, I were false to my convictions, and dis-

regarded what I believe to be the vital interests of my country. There are some people, no doubt, whose convictions and principles sit so lightly upon them that they can swallow them with ease—whenever their disappearance becomes convenient. But, for my part, I prefer to seek example and precedent in the life of the great leader to whom, for the first time, I am now opposed. In the course of his illustrious career, Mr. Gladstone has on more than one occasion found it necessary to separate himself from a Government whose policy he could not conscientiously approve, and I am well assured he would be of all men the last to condemn in others the consistency which on similar occasions he had himself so honourably maintained.

## THE CLAIMS OF ULSTER

CARDIFF, JULY 6, 1886

I WANT you to consider for a moment the state of things in Ulster and the claims of that province. I speak of Ulster, because in Ulster there is a majority of Protestants, and specially because it is that province which gives the most strenuous opposition to the policy of the Government. At the same time I do not leave out of sight the numberless minorities, not always Protestant, but loyal Roman Catholics —the numberless minorities, scattered up and down Ireland, who would be also unprotected. Who are these men who appeal to you? They are not 'the classes.' Ulster is a poor province, with a bad soil, and the vast majority of the population is poor. A great number of them are workers in the factories, and the remainder are all employed upon the land. But they are industrious, hard-working men who ask you to help them. Their industry has been the brightest spot in the history of Ireland. One of the great difficulties with which we have to deal in Ireland is the absence of any manufacturing industry. The habits of the people and the nature of the country have led the great majority to seek

their subsistence from the soil. But in one quarter of Ireland you have a great industry, which has been built up, established, and maintained, and which holds its own against the world. That industry is now denounced by the Parnellite party. The linen industry of Belfast is declared to be a curse to Ulster. Do you wonder that the men who derive their livelihood from it are alarmed at the prospect of a Parliament in which those who denounce this industry would have a majority? As working men, they ask you to protect their labour; as Protestants, they ask you to see that no injustice is done to their religion. You know that here in Wales—I do not know how it may be in Cardiff, but certainly in Wales generally, the vast majority of the people are opposed to State establishment. But how would you like to get rid of the Protestant State Church and find the Roman Catholic State Church substituted for it? That, in my opinion, would be the certain result—one of the first results—of the establishment of a rival Parliament in Dublin. And why would it be so? Just bear in mind this critical distinction between the Protestant and Catholic Church. The Protestant Church is founded upon the principle of toleration. It admits—I do not think it always practises—the principle of religious equality. The Catholic Church, by the necessity of the case, is opposed to toleration, and repudiates the doctrine of religious equality. Consequently, if the Catholic Church is anywhere in the majority it must try—I will not blame it for what is a part of its duty and faith—to obtain supremacy. We are told that we are reviving religious bigotry when we speak of these things. We are not; but we are not going to blind ourselves to facts, and it seems to me that those of us who are anxious here in England to remove every shred of religious ascendency—we who gave the heartiest support to Mr. Gladstone when he disestablished the Irish Church, which constituted an injustice to our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects—we, I say, have the right to be the first to protest against the possibility of a new religious ascendency being substituted in its place. But then it is said that it will be

impossible to establish a Church, because that is prohibited by the Government Bill. Well, I believe it is a doubtful matter. Lawyers do not agree whether the Bill does prohibit it or not. But, in any case, I will venture to say that the prohibition is a paper prohibition, and not worth the paper which it is written upon. Do you think for a moment that if you set up a Parliament with the functions of a Parliament and the ambition of a Parliament, it will rest contented with your restrictions and provisions? Will it cease from working until it has removed them, until it becomes, in fact as well as in name, an independent governing authority?

But I want to point out to you that this prohibition, this attempted prohibition, is altogether inconsistent with another of the phrases to which I have referred. We are told now that it is our duty to allow the Irish people to manage their own affairs. Well, why did not the Government allow them to manage their own affairs? Why did they prohibit them from establishing a Church of their own? Why do they interfere with them at every step? Why prevent them from securing the religious arrangements which they prefer? Why restrict their control of education? Why take from them everything which concerns trade and navigation? Why, above all, do they not allow them to settle their own account with their own landlords? I do not believe in these restrictions. I believe, on the contrary, that if we are to accept any such policy as that promoted by the Government, we should be much wiser men to go in at once for separation. You might cut Ireland adrift altogether and a pretty mess she would make of her affairs then. I do not advise it. I do not approve it. I think it would be to the danger of England, but you might do it with less difficulty and danger than by giving Ireland a mongrel constitution which will never satisfy her full demands, and will only be a fulcrum for further agitation. . . . Remember that you are not dealing now with the free opinion of the Irish people—not even the free opinion of those three and a half millions whose votes returned the eighty-six members

to Parliament—but with men who, it is notorious, receive the funds and therefore take their cues from the enemies of England in the United States of America. They take their cues from their foreign paymasters. You may believe me, those gentlemen would not find the money unless they were able to direct the policy. Are you going to allow Great Britain to be ruled from America by the American-Irish of that country, the party whose motives are hostility to Great Britain, and whose methods are the assassination of her statesmen, the destruction of her public buildings, and the wholesale outrage which spares neither age nor sex.

Gentlemen, your ancestors have met great difficulties and dangers, and have confronted them successfully. They have resisted the tyranny of kings; they have borne without flinching the terrors of a persecuting Church; they have again and again rolled back the tide of foreign invasion from our shores; they have overcome the most powerful combination of their foes; and now will you, their descendants—you upon whose shoulders the burden of their Empire has fallen—will you be so poor-spirited as to break up your ancient Constitution, to destroy your venerable Parliament, and to surrender your well-earned supremacy to the vile and ignoble forces of anarchy and disorder?

## THE COLONIES ARE INDEPENDENT

RAWTENSTALL, JULY 8, 1886

[In support of Lord Hartington's candidature, opposed by a local Gladstonian.]

MR. —— is willing to stake the future of this country, the future of Ireland, upon the chance that such a Parliament as is proposed will, *inter alia*, improve the condition of the Irish people and will constitute no injury to England. I say for myself that I am not willing to run that risk. It

is too great, and I believe that all the evidence that we can gather goes to prove that the experiment will be a failure.

One thing I am quite certain of is that any such legislative authority as has been proposed would not be accepted as a final settlement. We are told every now and again by gentlemen who have read very little, and know very little of the experience of the case, that we ought to look to our colonies. They say 'Look at Canada and Australia,' and exclaim, 'Why don't you treat Ireland in the same way? Won't she be equally loyal and equally contented?' Now these gentlemen are citing cases which, on the surface, I think are entirely different. Canada and Australia are thousands of miles away. That is one thing. Under no conceivable circumstance can they possibly cause us danger. Another thing is that in Canada and Australia you have not that great division of classes which has wrought so much difficulty in Ireland. The gentleman in the corner says you have them. All I say is, with great deference to his superior knowledge, that I am not aware of it. But I was going to point out to you that there is another thing which you have to bear in mind, that the relations between this country and the self-governing colonies are practically the relations between independent countries. Canada and Australia are quoted. They are nominally our colonies; they are nominally under our rule. Do we govern them? Are they really under the control of Great Britain? Not a bit of it. If you were to attempt to interfere with either of those colonies in the slightest degree they would cut adrift from you to-morrow. Let me take an illustration, and then you will understand the position at once. Suppose we got into a great war—I am afraid it is not altogether an impossible supposition—what would be the position of Canada and Australia? They would have had no part whatever in the policy which led to that war, and they would have no part whatever in finding the cost of that war. We should have to send ships, if necessary, to protect them against the enemy with which we were in conflict, but they would not have to find one single farthing of contribution to

the cost. (One of the audience here asked who would have to pay the cost if Australia were involved in a war with Russia.) Exactly. If I understand the question of my friend, he says if there were war between Russia and Australia. But there could not be as long as Australia is a colony; the war would have to be between Russia and England. I am very glad to have these questions put. I want you to understand this thing, and I want to argue it out with you, and if you do not understand anything I say I hope you will interrupt me. The question asked me is a very plain one, and a very reasonable one. Suppose we were at war with Russia—that is as good a case as any other—what would be the position of Australia? The position would be this. Russia might send a fleet to attack Australia because we were at war with Russia. We should have to defend Australia, but Australia would have had no part in the policy which led to that war with Russia, and Australia would not pay a penny towards the cost of that war. But there are very many people who believe that the result would be, if we ever got into a war, that the relations between us and our colonies would be so strained that they would break adrift altogether, and I think it is not altogether impossible. My point is this, that these colonies are connected with us by ties which are really very loose, and if we got into a war or anything of that kind practically they would break adrift and become separate countries. Is that the position that you want Ireland to occupy at the present moment? Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom, has a part in our sorrows and a part in our joys, shares in our privileges and shares in our obligations. Do you wish that to be changed, and Ireland to become a separate country whenever the Irish think fit? That is the position of Australia and Canada. If to-morrow any one of the Legislative Assemblies of the different provinces in Australia were to pass a resolution that they desired to be separate, do you suppose that we should send an army to compel them to remain as they are? Not a bit of it. The tie which binds us to Australia is a sentimental tie. That is very

valuable, and I hope it may long continue to exist. But I hope more than that. I hope we may be able to strengthen it; I hope we may be able sooner or later to federate, to bring together, all these great independencies of the British Empire into one supreme and Imperial Parliament, so that they should all be units of one body, that one should feel what the others feel, that all should be equally responsible, that all should have a share in the welfare, and sympathise with the welfare of every part. That is what I hope, but there is very little hope for it if you weaken the ties which now bind the central portion of the Empire together.

## THE REAL IRISH DEMANDS

BIRMINGHAM, JANUARY 29, 1887

No one who is not wilfully blind can ignore the statements and speeches which have been made by the Irish leaders prior to the introduction of Mr. Gladstone's Bill. They varied in language, but they were all to the same effect—that they would be satisfied with nothing which did not give them the independence of their nation, and which did not break the last link which bound Ireland to England. Well, they may now be willing to take less than that as an instalment. But if we are to make their wishes our sole guide, it is simply dishonest to pretend to satisfy them at the same time that we refuse to them the most important part of their demand. The Gladstonian Liberals repudiate now with heat and indignation the term of 'Separatist.' They repudiate it as hotly as, eighteen months ago, they repudiated the idea of Home Rule. But their position is inconsistent. In one breath they tell us that the first condition of any settlement is that we must satisfy the Irish members, and in the same breath they tell us that nothing will induce them to concede to the Irish members their original and most important demand. They are in a dilemma—and I respectfully call their attention to it—either that they must

be prepared to concede to the Irish members separation itself, if ever and whenever the Irish members ask for it—and in that case be sure we shall not wait long—or else they must repudiate altogether this new doctrine of absolute subserviency, and the abandonment of the right of judgment on the part of English Liberals.

## THE QUESTION OF ULSTER

### BELFAST, OCTOBER 11, 1887

[In the autumn of 1887 Mr. Chamberlain paid a political visit to Ulster, when the Loyalists gave him the welcome due to one to whom more than any English statesman they recognised that they owed their deliverance from Home Rule. From a political point of view the tour was a triumphant success. But the animosity which it roused among the Nationalists was so bitter, that the help of the American-Irish was invoked against a diplomatic mission on which Mr. Chamberlain was shortly about to visit the United States. See p. 318.]

. . . Now, I have had two objects in view in making this visit to Ulster, and I will state them frankly and at the outset. In the first place, I have wished for the opportunity of addressing the people of Ulster on the effect upon their interests of the great constitutional change which was proposed in the first instance by the avowed enemies of the United Kingdom, and which has now, unfortunately, been adopted by the leader and the great majority of the Liberal party. It seems to me that the time and the place are favourable for the examination of this point. If we were to take our views of Ireland exclusively from Parnellite sources we should come to the conclusion that it was a country in which hopeless destitution and misery almost universally prevail, and that that unfortunate condition of things was due to foreign rule and frightful misgovernment, and that any attempt to reform this odious tyranny —or even a natural expression of discontent—was sternly repressed and put down by an all-pervading and brutal despotism. But before he accepted absolutely such a picture

as that, the impartial observer—if any are still left—would inquire whether Ulster—which has more than a quarter of the area of Ireland and more than one-third of the population—is blessed with a different Government or is subject to other laws than those which have this baneful effect upon the rest of Ireland. And if not, he would perhaps go on to inquire why Ulster is, on the whole, prosperous, contented, and loyal; why she is all this with a soil which is more sterile, and with natural conditions which are certainly not more advantageous than those of the rest of the kingdom; how it is that she has become, in a country mainly given over to agricultural pursuits, the seat of gigantic industry, and of a great and successful commerce; how it is that she rivals in her peaceful enterprise and industry, in her progress, and in her loyalty, the most favoured districts in Her Majesty's dominions. How is it that Belfast continues to increase and multiply, while Cork and Waterford decline? Well, I say the impartial observer that I have invented for the nonce would, I think, have to answer these questions—at all events to his own satisfaction—before he was content to exchange the Constitution under which you live and prosper for the dubious advantages of a Dublin Parliament. Then, I wanted in the second place, and as the second object of my visit, to do something to direct public attention in Great Britain to the claims and position of the minority in Ireland. Of all the curious developments which have been brought about by the introduction of the Home Rule Bill there is none, to my mind, so surprising—I would even say unnatural—as the neglect, the apathy, and the ignorance which a large portion of the Liberal party in England and Scotland have shown as to the interests, rights, and just and proper claims of their co-religionists and fellow-countrymen in Ireland. Let us just look at the simple facts of the case. Ireland has a population of about five millions. Of that number, three millions, or it may be three and a half millions, desire a great experiment, which is strenuously resisted by the remainder. But this minority of one and a half or two millions is not an ordinary minority.

It is a minority which includes almost all the cultivated intelligence of the country. It includes the greater part of its enterprise, a large proportion of its wealth. It embraces, almost to a man, the whole of the Protestant population. It includes every one of Scotch or English birth and descent. It is connected, therefore, by ties of race and religion and sympathy with the greater nation of which it is proud to form a part. It is loyal and law-abiding, and it boasts of its share in the history of the United Kingdom, every page of whose annals has been illustrated by the valour and the genius of its citizens. I am not going to pursue the comparison; it would be invidious to contrast the position and character of the majority.

But I ask myself how comes it that a minority—so important in its numbers, so influential, and entitled to so much respect for the nature and character of its claims—is actually put aside and treated as of no account in the discussion of proposals by which it is sought to transfer its allegiance to a domination it has good reason to dread and distrust, while the noisy clamour of the majority is suffered to pass as the only true voice of Ireland. Gentlemen, I think I can find one reason which may explain, although I do not say that it justifies, the disproportion in the public estimate between the respective claims of loyalty and sedition. Loyalty in the House of Commons—Irish loyalty—is represented only by seventeen votes, and sedition, on the contrary, enjoys a majority of eighty-six votes. Even in Ulster, even in the province in which I am speaking, out of thirty-three members the Loyalists can only secure sixteen; a majority of one is counted on the side of the Parnellite or Nationalist party. Now, I think it is possible, under these circumstances, that careless observers may argue from such a predominant majority in the House of Commons that there is only an insignificant minority in the country, and, as that is a matter of very great importance, I have been following an illustrious example, and I have been pursuing some studies in the

science of political meteorology. I have been investigating the returns at elections, and certainly I have come to some conclusions which go far to modify the result of a cursory inspection of the returns. I find, in the first place, that in Ulster in 1886 twenty-six seats were contested, with the result that thirteen Parnellites and thirteen Loyalists were returned, but that the votes given for the thirteen Parnellites were 73,000, while the votes given for the thirteen Unionists were 89,000—so that with a majority of Unionists of 20 per cent. there was actually a tie in the result of the election. Well then, I find that the total electorate of Ulster averages 8084 electors for each of its thirty-three seats; but the electorate for the rest of Ireland averages only 6987. In other words, seven Nationalists in the South of Ireland are counted as good as eight Loyalists in the province of Ulster. Well, let us go a step further than this. If Ulster were treated as the rest of Ireland is, and if it returned its members in proportion to the opinions and numbers of the voters, then Ulster would have thirty-eight members, of whom twenty-one would be Loyalists and seventeen Parnellites, instead of the present arrangement, in which, with the majority of Loyalist votes, there is a minority of Loyalist members. I really think that this is a matter which requires a little explanation and attention. It appears to me that there might even be a suspicion of jerrymandering in these figures, and that at all events the loyal people of Ireland ought not to rest until there has been such a revision of the distribution of political power as would at all events give them their fair share and their fair proportion of the representation in Parliament. Now, turning to the whole of Ireland, I find in 1885 seventy seats were contested by Parnellites and Loyalists. I leave out of account a certain number of seats which were contested between Liberals and Conservatives, and one seat contested by two Parnellites; but, taking the seventy seats in which there was a square fight between Unionists and Parnellites, I find that the votes given were 293,000 Parnellites and 80,000 Unionists, or about three and a half to one, but the numbers returned

were sixty-five to five, or thirteen to one. Then, in 1886, thirty-two seats were contested. The votes were 96,000 for the Parnellites and 98,000 for the Loyalists, or a slight majority for the Loyalists. And yet for these same seats the return shows nineteen Parnellites and thirteen Loyalists. A majority of six of the seats went to the Parnellites, though the Unionists had a majority of 2000 in the votes. Lastly, in 1885, the number of Parnellite votes polled was only half the number of the electors on the register in the constituencies contested, and yet the party which only commands half the votes on the register is able to return five-sixths of the members to Parliament. I think you will agree with me that very considerable importance is to be attached to these figures. You will remember that Mr. Gladstone has himself told us again and again that he was led to give up the whole programme on which he had fought the election of 1885, and to undertake this vexed question of Home Rule, by the fact that eighty-six Parnellite members, in favour of Home Rule, were returned to the Parliament of 1886. If that party had only had its proper proportion of members it would have had sixty, or at the most sixty-five ; and in that case it is highly probable, according to his own statement, that Mr. Gladstone would not have destroyed the Liberal party and endangered the union between England and Ireland.

Well, gentlemen, I know that Mr. Gladstone says you must not go behind the ballot-box, and that the representation in Parliament must be taken to be the exact and proper expression of the opinions of the people. But I do not find that this principle has prevented Mr. Gladstone from questioning pretty sharply the mandate of the majority just at present opposed to him in the House of Commons. And therefore I feel justified in asking that the votes of the Irish members shall be weighed as well as counted ; and in any case, I call public attention to the fact that such a minority as that to which I have referred, however it may be represented in Parliament, should on no account be neglected in the settlement of the question in which it

has such a vital interest. I shall be told to-morrow that these calculations are altogether unimportant, because they leave untouched the undoubted fact that at present there is a majority in Ireland in favour of Home Rule, and it is said that according to the old Liberal principle majorities must rule, whether large or small majorities. If that referred only to matters of ordinary legislation I should be very glad to adopt and accept it. But I cannot help thinking that our opponents push their arguments too far. You will remember that in the American Constitution, which has recently been the object of the most unqualified eulogy by Mr. Gladstone, although all subjects of ordinary legislation are left to be decided by the bare majority, the Constitution itself is treated as a solemn compact. It is a treaty, and a treaty which cannot be altered even in the slightest particular without what is practically the general assent of all concerned. I claim, then, for the minority in Ireland that at least it shall have a veto upon any settlement which may be proposed in this matter affecting its dearest interests and all which it sedulously and jealously guards. In any case, I am convinced that Ulster will have an important part in the future discussion of the subject. It cannot be put aside; and if, as I fear, it is likely we shall be called upon once more to resist proposals for the disintegration of the Empire, it is Ulster that will hold the key of the position. The responsibility is great, the obligation is onerous, but the honour also is singular and marked. It will not be for the first time in her history that Ulster has played this distinguished part. Once before, two hundred years ago, in a corner of Ulster, and behind the walls of Derry, a few brave and resolute men rolled back the tide, and saved Ireland from a thraldom worse than any foreign tyranny. Their heroism lives still in your hearts; and, if once more the issue which they decided for a time must be faced and settled, I believe the men of Ulster will shrink from no necessary sacrifice, will make every effort to preserve and maintain the privileges and rights which their ancestors won for them.

## ULSTER AGAIN

BELFAST, OCTOBER 12, 1887

[On October 12 Mr. Chamberlain addressed a mass meeting in the Ulster Hall. The hall was crowded, and an overflow meeting had to be held to relieve the pressure at the doors.]

I HAVE already, in the course of my short visit to Ulster, gathered much food for suggestive reflection. I find myself in a country which I am daily told is groaning under a brutal and all-pervading tyranny. And yet I am surrounded by men who are as devoted to the British connection as the people of Glasgow or of Birmingham. Here in Belfast I meet with every sign of prosperity and progress. Without any special natural advantages, your port, your docks, your factories, and your public buildings bear witness to the public spirit which has animated your citizens, which has created your trade, and which has adorned your streets. Everywhere there are signs of prosperity, of active progress, and of enterprise. To-morrow I hope to see something more of the agricultural districts of Ulster. Unless I am altogether misinformed, I shall find everywhere the same characteristics and similar, if perhaps less striking, results. At a time when great agricultural depression exists—when the farmers of Great Britain are vainly striving to meet their obligations, and when a great deal of the best land in England is lying fallow because it will not pay to work it —I find by the statistics that in Ulster there is yearly taken an increasing quantity of land for cultivation. If I had time to go further, if I were able to go west, for instance to Donegal, I know I should find a different state of things. I know that there, on the wild western coast of this island, I should find people struggling against unfavourable natural conditions like their fellow-subjects, the poor crofters of the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland. The condition of these poor people is a matter for sympathy and for active help. I believe it is not beyond the reach of

statesmanship to do something to better the conditions of their lives, and I hope before I leave Ireland to indicate the direction in which such an improvement may be sought for. But I only refer to this now in order that I may complete my survey, and I may say that, speaking generally, throughout Ulster we find that, except where nature herself seems to interpose barriers to progress, there are everywhere signs of prosperity, of industry, of loyalty, which leave nothing to be desired, and which contrast favourably with other portions of Her Majesty's dominions. But, gentlemen, those results have been accomplished under the same general conditions, under the same laws, under the same Government which are said to press so hardly upon the prosperity of the rest of Ireland. I am not here to tell you that our Government and our laws are perfect and that they cannot be amended. On the contrary, I am here to say that you have now a Parliament representative of every class, of every interest in the three kingdoms, better able and more willing than any Parliament before it to deal with all reasonable claims, and to relieve all proved defects. But I say that these defects, whatever they may be, do not account for the difference between the state of affairs in the North and South of Ireland.

If you want an explanation you must go further, and then you will find that there are two Irelands. There is an Ireland which is prosperous and loyal and contented. There is an Ireland which is miserable and dissatisfied, and continually under the control and leadership of agitators who profit by the disturbance that they create. There are two races in Ireland, and when it is proposed to put a race which has shown all the qualities of a dominant people, which has proved, in the history of the world, that it can justify the ascendency that it has secured—when it is proposed to put that race under the other, which, whatever its merits may be, has always failed in the qualities which compel success, I say that that is an attempt against nature, an attempt which all history and all experience show must of necessity fail, and can only lead to disaster and con-

fusion. I am not in favour of submitting Ulster to a Dublin Parliament. It is not because I believe that even under these circumstances your religious faith and convictions would be in any danger. The Protestant Churches of Ulster would be quite able to take care of themselves even under those circumstances. The days of religious persecution are gone. The Inquisition cannot be re-established in the nineteenth century. There might be—I think there would be—petty annoyances of which you would have a right to complain. There might be injustice, grievous injustice, perpetrated upon you under such circumstances; but, after all, anything in the nature of active oppression and persecution is out of the question. But what I fear, what I repudiate on your behalf, and what I hope you will repudiate to the utmost of your power, is the possibility of submitting your intelligence, your orderly and regulated life, your great commercial reputation, to the rule of an authority which is to be officered by the men who invented the Plan of Campaign and propounded the no-rent manifesto.

Gentlemen, we have had some experience of what an Irish Nationalist Government means. I will not refer to past history. I will not speak of Irish Parliaments which have existed in the past, although I will say that the Catholic Parliament of Tyrconnell and the Protestant Parliament before the Union combined between them all the worst vices that could possibly distinguish a legislative body. Neither will I refer to our experience, our daily experience, of boards of guardians and municipal corporations in which the National League has the upper hand, although their proceedings form a very interesting page of parliamentary history, and were discussed, and fully discussed, before a parliamentary committee. But I will take my illustration from another country, which has always been the home of discontented Irishmen, and where they are free from any of the disadvantages and from the restrictions of which they complain so much at home. America has given a welcome to strangers, and has allowed to them such liberties and privileges that it has been possible for the Irish emigrant

within a very short time of his reaching the shores of America to obtain a predominant influence and absolute control over some of the institutions of his adopted country. In that way the Irish vote, which is always very powerful, has been absolutely supreme in some of the great cities, and notoriously at one time in the greatest of all, the city of New York. The Government of New York—it was not called an Irish Parliament, it was known by the name of the Tammany Ring—that Government, according to all impartial American opinion, was the most corrupt, the most immoral, the most ineffective, with which a civilised people have ever been afflicted. Gentlemen, the experience is not encouraging to us, and for my part I cannot accept as desirable or possible the degradation of the great city of Belfast and the province of Ulster under a Tammany Ring in Dublin.

But now, gentlemen, if I have correctly represented your opinion in reference to this matter, if I am justified in saying that you will not under any circumstances transfer your allegiance from the great Parliament of Westminster—the mother of Parliaments—to some pale travesty in Dublin, draped with sham properties for the benefit and glorification of a committee of the National League; if I am justified in saying that on your part, I am justified in asking Mr. Gladstone what he intends to do in face of your refusal. Bear in mind what this question is. It is not the question of Home Rule for Ireland. We must admit that the majority in the three southern provinces are in favour of some change which they call Home Rule, and which would relieve them from the interference and control of the Parliament at Westminster. I think they are wrong. I think that they would be the first to regret such a concession if it were ever made. But for the moment and for the sake of argument, let us assume that it is right that they should have this relief—that they should have this separate Government—even then I say that there is no reason why the people of Ulster, who do not want this separate Government, who rejoice in the connection which they have honoured and

illustrated—there is no reason, I say, why the people of Ulster should be forcibly severed from their relations with Great Britain; and, above all, there is no reason why they should be put under a domination which they have every reason to distrust and suspect. I think, then, that I am entitled in your name and on your behalf—I should not venture to put any further question on my own authority, as I know that Mr. Gladstone would not recognise it—but on your behalf and in your name I ask Mr. Gladstone, when he speaks at Nottingham in the course of the next week, to tell us plainly, so that every man may understand, how in any future scheme which he may propose for the government of Ireland he intends to deal with the claims of Ulster. I have asked the question before—I have never received a satisfactory answer. The other day Mr. John Morley, speaking as Mr. Gladstone's lieutenant to a meeting of free-lunchers which was invited to Templecombe to enjoy the hospitality of one of Mr. Gladstone's recent creations—Mr. Morley undertook to reply to a challenge which I had previously addressed to him. Mr. Morley said that it was a work of supererogation for the Gladstonians to explain their programme or give any details, for all the world knew perfectly well what they meant. He said—'We mean to stand firm as a rock to Mr. Gladstone's plan, and to those modifications in it to which Mr. Gladstone has himself consented.' Gentlemen, that is a very oracular reply, but it conveys very little information. What are the modifications to which Mr. Gladstone has consented? How do they affect the province of Ulster? How do they affect the claims of the loyal population of Ireland? All that Mr. Gladstone has said is this—that if a practical scheme for the separate treatment of Ulster could be proposed—and if this scheme could be recommended by a predominant, or at all events by a general, acceptance, that then it would receive at his hands the most favourable consideration, with every desire to do what equity might seem to recommend. I do not know whether that conveys much comfort to your minds. But I may point out to you that there is in this statement no pledge, no promise whatever,

except that if Mr. Gladstone is once more in power, he will use his own discretion as to how he will deal with Ulster. Now, gentlemen, I think under these circumstances, and considering the importance of the question, that we are entitled to ask Mr. Gladstone to tell us a little more of his mind. We will put to him a plain question. We will ask him to be good enough to answer it with a 'Yes' or a 'No.' We will ask him, will he, in any future scheme which he may put before the people of the three kingdoms, provide for a separate treatment of the province of Ulster, or of any portion of that province? Surely it is not too much to ask for an affirmative or a negative answer to such a question as that. Your lives, your property, your interests, all depend upon the answer. And yet I predict that at Nottingham Mr. Gladstone will put it by. Mr. Gladstone insists upon a blank cheque, and will not tell you, and will not tell the people of the three kingdoms, what he intends to do with it. All he will tell you is that you must give him power, and when he has power—when he can do what he likes—then he will tell you what he intends to do. I know that there are some reasons, and good reasons, why Mr. Gladstone should be unwilling to answer such a question as that I have put to him. It is all very well for Mr. Morley to give us occasional glimpses of his mind, and to show that at least he has learned nothing and forgotten nothing in the course of the last two years, but that he remains of the same mind, firm to the old plan, believing it to be the best, and that though he may be willing to make modifications, he will take care that these modifications shall not materially alter the original plan. Mr. Gladstone is too old a parliamentary hand to make such a tactical mistake. Mr. Gladstone knows that if he were to tell us that he is prepared to treat Ulster separately, Mr. Parnell would not give a brass button for any Home Rule Parliament which had not authority over Ulster, and above all which had no power to tax the most wealthy and prosperous province in the kingdom. And, on the other hand, if Mr. Gladstone were to say plainly that it was his intention to pass by your just representations,

to give no consideration to the views and wishes of the loyal part of the population in Ireland, and to coerce it, if need be, into submission, then, I think, he would be offering a provocation to a high-spirited people, to which it would be almost impossible to submit, and at the same time he would strain almost to breaking the loyalty even of his own subservient followers.

Now, there is another point which I think has a great interest for you here, and to which I should like to refer. If I understand your views, you repudiate altogether any severance from the traditions and the history, the responsibilities and the privileges, of the great nation with which you have been so long connected. Your citizens have led our armies and our fleets ; they have sat at our council boards ; there is not a page in our annals which has not been illustrated by their deeds. We are all members of one great community, we are joint-heirs of the glories and the possessions of the United Kingdom, and, unless I very much mistake your spirit, you are not willing to surrender this glorious inheritance, this part in a mighty empire, for a second place in a petty kingdom, which is to be founded on a new constitution, framed by the Convention of Chicago and intended as a substitute for the Ten Commandments. And, therefore, you desire to maintain your full and free representation in the Imperial Parliament of Britain ; yes, and also because you believe that this Imperial Parliament is the guarantee for your lives and liberties, which would be imperilled by any subordinate authority representing merely a local predominance. But, gentlemen, under these circumstances, I say at any rate you are entitled to ask from Mr. Gladstone how does he intend to deal with you. Mr. Gladstone says that the exclusion of the Irish members from Westminster is not an essential part of his plan. He has said in one of his recent speeches that he thought the matter might be left over for the present—might be left in its existing position until in a few years we can come to its further consideration with better hopes of a settlement. Well, gentlemen, that is a Gladstonian utterance. It leaves too much to the imagina-

tion. With us the continued supremacy, the effective and undoubted supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and the full representation of every part of the United Kingdom in that Parliament, are essential, cardinal conditions of and alteration in the government of Ireland or of any part of the kingdom, and with us they are the sole and only guarantees for the continued integrity of the country. Now, in the speech by Mr. Morley to which I have already referred, although he did not reply to my challenge, although he gave me no details of their new plan which is to be substituted for the Bill that has been dead so many times, and which still threatens us with resurrection, he challenged me to propose a substitute—he challenged me to put before the people of the three kingdoms the exact details of the plan by which I would concede to Ireland a certain extension of the privileges and rights of local government. I confess I think this challenge is not in accordance with Mr. Morley's usual candour. He is the last man in the world to make such a demand upon me, because he knows exactly what I would propose and how far I think it safe to go. Ever since the Round Table Conference he and his colleagues have been in possession of my mind upon this subject. I do not know whether my plan would meet with general approval, but at least Mr. Morley and his friends are perfectly well acquainted with it, and it was only when it became necessary for them to say how far they accepted it, and how far Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Parnell were prepared to accept it, that they found a pretext for delaying further negotiations and refused to give any information. Gentlemen, I think you will agree with me that this is not encouraging. I am not prepared to make further advances, at all events till I know that my advances will be met in a spirit of reciprocal frankness.

But, in the meantime, there are two preliminary questions which I should be very happy to discuss with our opponents, and upon which I should be glad to have a full expression of their views. In the first place, I should like to know what are their relations with Mr. Parnell—what are the conditions of the alliance they have formed. That is a very important

question. In past times the Liberal party has honourably asserted itself as the guardian of public law and order. It has proclaimed the necessity of maintaining the dignity of Parliament as the sole guarantee for the continued efficiency of our free representative institutions. But within the last year or two we have found a proportion of the Liberal party and some of its most trusted leaders tacitly encouraging, if they have not actually stimulated, obstruction in Parliament, and throwing their shield over disorder and disloyalty in Ireland. There was once upon a time a negotiation, the result of which was known as the Kilmainham treaty, and the Kilmainham treaty provided as one of its articles that Mr. Parnell should use henceforth his best endeavours to maintain law and order in Ireland. I want to know whether in the new treaty—the treaty of Hawarden—there is an article which requires the leaders of the Liberal party to throw their shield over disloyalty and sedition, and to defend outrage and violence. We are told that it is absolutely necessary that any plan for a settlement of the Irish question must be acceptable to Mr. Parnell. What does that mean? If it means that Mr. Parnell, or some one behind him—some one who pays the piper and pulls the strings—is to be dictator in this matter, and to impose upon the Parliament at Westminster the final settlement of the affairs of an integral part of the United Kingdom—then, I say, such a proceeding is a surrender which is abject, humiliating, and dangerous. If it only means, on the other hand, that Mr. Parnell and those whom he represents are to be consulted in any settlement of Ireland, I should be the first to admit the necessity of such consultation: and I do not suppose any reasonable person would dispute it; only I should claim that the representatives of the loyal population should have at least an equally influential vote, and that it should be understood that any change in the Constitution should be not a mere partisan settlement to be rammed down the throats of opponents, but a settlement which commended itself to the calm judgment of the great majority of the nation.

Well, then, there is a second question which I think is of even greater importance. On what principle are we to seek the settlement of this question? If all that is suggested is a great extension of local government and municipal privileges, I only say for myself that I attach such high importance to the privileges of local government, and to the incomplete arrangements which we already possess, that I should rejoice at a great and generous extension, believing in that way we should find relief from the congestion of Parliament, which is one of the greatest evils of our time; believing also that we should find in it scope for local ambition, and, above all, a development, a much-needed development, of the sense of local responsibility in Ireland. But, gentlemen, if, on the contrary, as I fear is the case from Mr. Gladstone's utterances, it is intended to seek a settlement on the principle of a distinct nationality of Ireland, then I beg you to understand what it is we are discussing, and to remember that, whatever this may be called, it is a scheme for complete and absolute independence. It is that, and nothing else. Now, I think I can make that clear to you in a minute. I ask you if you think it probable that any nation in the world, claiming to be a nation, would be satisfied without all the privileges and prerogatives of nationhood? What are they? They are control over its own legislation, including its criminal legislation, control over its commercial relations, control over its connection with foreign countries, control over its army and navy. Mr. Gladstone on many occasions has referred to the case of our self-governing colonies as an illustration. In his last speech he spoke of New South Wales; in a previous one he spoke of Canada. But, gentlemen, are we going to blind ourselves to the fact that the tie which unites us to our self-governing colonies is one of the slenderest description, that it is one which can be broken at the pleasure of any one of these colonies, and that we should have nothing to say to it? Already the great colonies have control over their own criminal law and judicature. They have entire control over their internal taxation; they make their own tariffs; some

of them have an army or militia of their own ; and now they are getting a separate navy. The arrangement between our colonies and ourselves is essentially a temporary one. It cannot remain as it is. Either, as I hope may be the case, it will be in the future strengthened by ties of federation, or it will be loosened altogether. Already you have in the colony of Canada, the greatest of all our colonies, an agitation for what is called commercial union with the United States. Commercial union with the United States means free trade between America and the Dominion, and a protective tariff against the mother country. If Canada desires that, Canada can have it ; but Canada can only have it knowing perfectly well that commercial union with America in such circumstances means political separation from Great Britain. For it is quite impossible for Great Britain to continue to retain all the responsibilities and obligations of the connection when all the advantages of it are taken away. And, therefore, let us not shut our eyes for a moment to the fact that, if we are called upon to consider in the case of Ireland a proposition for making Ireland like Canada or like New South Wales, we are called upon to consider a proposition for separation—whatever our opponents may call it—a proposition for creating Ireland a separate kingdom, probably a separate republic, and it must be upon that ground and with that understanding that we discuss the conditions.

Well, gentlemen, I ask you are you prepared to accept this separation ? And if you are not, if you refuse, I wonder, gentlemen, whether Mr. Morley, with his keen appreciation of the evils of arbitrary authority—Mr. Morley who shrinks from defending the police when they resist with arms the violence of a brutal mob—I wonder whether Mr. Morley is coming down here with troops of horse and foot to coerce you. Is he going to force you to accept a settlement which in your hearts and consciences you believe will be disastrous to your best interests ? And, if he were willing to attempt it, I do not think he would find many followers. It is because the strength of your resistance is

misunderstood and unknown that the people of Great Britain, or many of them, have been led to support Mr. Gladstone in a proposal which might be Home Rule for a part of Ireland, but which would mean the servitude of Ulster. I suppose Mr. Morley hopes to convert you, and that it is with that object that such missionaries are sent down as Mr. Sexton, Mr. Healy, and Mr. O'Brien, and it is anticipated that they will touch the hearts of the men of Ulster, and lead you to find salvation in the gospel of public plunder. I remember some years ago—shortly after I entered Parliament—listening to a very eloquent speech by Mr. P. J. Smyth, who was then member for Westmeath. Mr. Smyth was a Nationalist and a patriot of the old stamp, before patriotism became profitable, and was quoted in the market at so many dollars a head. And Mr. Smyth was accordingly repudiated before his death by the new school. But on the occasion to which I refer he warned the irreconcilable party that they had no claim to independence unless they showed themselves worthy of it; and he pointed out to them that defiance of the law and abuse of the privileges which they already enjoyed were but a poor preparation for the greater liberties which they demanded. But, gentlemen, this warning has been neglected. The men who claim to be the government of Ireland are now endeavouring to make all government impossible. Those who desire to be entrusted with the duty of framing your laws are the men who teach that no law need be obeyed by those who disapprove of it. The future judges insult the Bench —the future Executive defy the police. They sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. Gentlemen, they are not safe guides and teachers. They are not the stuff of which a prudent nation should make its governors, and above all you—you who have most to lose from the reckless policy which would destroy the credit and reputation upon which you have founded your enterprises and industries—you will refuse to exchange your right to live under a Constitution beneath which your ancestors and yourselves have prospered, for submission to a Parliament in Dublin which

is to be offered by a committee of the National League. I do not conceal from you that in my judgment the danger is great and imminent. We in England have fought the fight hitherto, not without success. I think it more than probable that the brunt of the contest will now fall on your shoulders. I believe that you will quit yourselves like men whenever the liberties and privileges you seek to defend are assailed, and I have faith in the ultimate good sense of the majority of my fellow-countrymen. This United Kingdom of ours has been built up by the sacrifices and the resolution of many generations. It has stood the shock of the storm and the rage of the whirlwind. May we not say of it now, in the words of the American poet who lived to witness the greatest contest of our time, waged in order to defend the integrity of the commonwealth :

'Sail on, O ship of State,
Sail on, O Union strong and great;
Humanity, with all its fears,
With all its hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.'

## A UNIONIST POLICY FOR IRELAND

BIRMINGHAM, MAY 28, 1888

[On May 28, 1888, the first meeting of the grand committee of the Liberal Unionist Association of Birmingham, then just formed, was held in the Town Hall. Mr. Chamberlain was elected President of the Association, and in the following speech justified the Liberal Unionist position, and the progressive character of modern Conservatism.]

I AM proud to be the president of this great association—representative in the truest and the best sense of the well-tried Liberalism and Radicalism of Birmingham. Like Mr. Dixon, I also regret that this new departure should have been forced upon us ; but it became probable three years ago, when the great leader of the Liberal party, at a few weeks' notice, turned his back upon all his old professions

and on the principles that he had advocated during the greater part of his life, and surrendered to a faction whose policy he had denounced in eloquent language. And it became inevitable when the local minority that form his followers in this town, not content with the position which they held, and which was altogether beyond anything either their just influence or their numbers could claim, destroyed the representative character of the old Liberal Association, turned it into a Home Rule caucus, and shattered that great instrument of Liberal progress. I cannot help thinking that they must already be inclined to regret their action. The shadow and the name is theirs; but the substance is ours. As Mr. Brown has told you, here are all the men who have made the name of the Liberal Association famous. Here is the working Liberalism of Birmingham, here are the men who have given time and labour and unselfish devotion to the Liberal cause. I am taunted sometimes with having deserted my friends. Where are the friends that I have deserted? I do not miss them in this hall. And, gentlemen, your place on the Liberal Association will be ill supplied by the new allies, whose more or less disinterested services, and whose more or less sober judgment, the leaders of the Home Rule party enlisted on the occasion of the late election of the committee of the Two Thousand. Now, in future, I suppose, we have to reckon with three political organisations in Birmingham; but at present I know of only two parties. One is the National and the Unionist party, and the other is the Gladstonian or Home Rule party. This is a great issue, and as long as this issue remains all others are minor considerations.

Mr. Gladstone has called attention to the change which has come over the policy of what he called the Conservative Government, but what I prefer to call the Unionist Government. I have often pointed out to you before that with the extension of the franchise and the spread of democratic ideas the old Toryism has died out. There may be still a few representatives of it, but I do not know who they are and, at all events, their views have found no exponents in the

present Government, and one consequence is that while the present Government and their supporters are agreed with us in preserving the union of the country, they are no less anxious than we are to promote all reasonable and safe reforms. I am quite prepared to admit that the Government does not go far enough for me, but I have never found a Government yet that did. They go a good deal further than the last Government did, and they go a good deal further than I had any idea that either Mr. Gladstone or any of his principal supporters would go, until they began to bid for votes, and to fish for them with every imaginable bait. They are quite willing according to their recent speeches, to support the extremest views—the Unauthorised Programme is nothing to them. They are ready to outbid it, although three years ago they thought it most dangerous, most inopportune, and most ill-advised. But while they give these pledges, which in themselves would be satisfactory to me, some of which, however, go further perhaps than anything I should desire, I am unable to place confidence in their promises. I know perfectly well, and you know, that if by these means they were to obtain power again to-morrow, all these pledges and promises would be cast to the winds, and that once more we should be embarked in a great project of constitutional change which I believe would endanger the best interests of the country, and certainly land us in an almost endless controversy, accompanied by violence, and probably by civil strife. Well, as a practical man, I confess I prefer a bird in the hand to two in the bush. I prefer the extension of local government in England, which it has been one of the objects of my political life to obtain ; I prefer consideration of the interests of the agricultural labourers, the safety of the miners, some provision for the distressed crofters in Scotland, commercial reforms for which people have long been waiting—I prefer these changes, these practical reforms, all of which I believe we are in the way of getting from the present Government—to the prospect of this great political revolution to which Mr. Gladstone invites us.

And as long as this is the issue, I am altogether indifferent to the taunts which Mr. Gladstone continually addresses to us for what he calls our alliance with the Tories. I think that those with whom we are allied have ceased to be Tories, as I think that those with whom we were allied have ceased to be Liberals. At the present moment a common danger unites us, and we are facing a common foe. In political life I have always understood—I have experienced the fact—that compromise and concession are necessary. But if I am to choose, I prefer a compromise which does not endanger the interests of my country, and which is justified by the results, to one which would, in my opinion, lead to disaster, and which would tarnish the honour of the nation. And if I am to make concessions, I would rather make them to men who at all events are animated, as I hope I am myself, by patriotic aspirations, who are proud of the greatness of the United Kingdom, rather than to the men who are the promoters of disorder everywhere, the propounders of the Plan of Campaign, the instigators of the riots in Trafalgar Square, and the enemies of England in all parts of the world. Now, gentlemen, it appears to me that the same principles and the same considerations apply to local politics as well as to Imperial politics. Here, also, we have seen a considerable change in the policy of the Conservatives, caused by the altered circumstances of the case: we find the Conservatives of Birmingham ready to join with us to maintain the integrity of the country; we find them now willing also to work with us in maintaining that great municipal programme which has done so much for the appearance of our town, for the welfare, and for the comfort, and for the happiness of the great majority of its population. There is no longer any fear that the election of a few Conservatives to the Town Council would cause the work to slacken or to be stopped. And under these circumstances I hold it to be our duty at all times to sink all minor considerations and all minor differences, and to join with any or with all who will help us to save the country and to save the town from the disastrous consequences of the doctrines of

disorder, and anarchy, and division, which are now preached openly among us.

Gentlemen, what I want specially to impress upon you is the fact, which must be patent to every reasonable and intelligent man, that the Unionist policy which we are called upon to support, although it may not go so far as many of us would wish to go, is still not in any sense a stationary, and above all is not a reactionary, policy. We are not sacrificing any principles by supporting it. We should only sacrifice principles if we accepted the doctrines which the Gladstonian Liberals have taken from their Parnellite leaders. We are prepared to resist revolution, but we are still ready to welcome reform, and the alliance has already produced great results, greater in the shape of domestic reform than we can count for some years past. It was understood with general assent—I think I may say with the almost universal approval of the great bulk of the nation—that the present session in Parliament should be an English and a Scottish session, and that it should not be devoted wholly, as past sessions had been, to the consideration of Irish affairs. It appears to me that in the clash of contending parties we are sometimes apt to forget what has been done for Ireland. We speak of the grievances of Ireland as though the Ireland with which we have to deal were the Ireland of Wolfe Tone or the Ireland of O'Connell, or even the Ireland of Mr. Butt; but the fact is that all the grievances against which these great previous leaders of Irish agitation protested have been removed; that more has been done for the Irish people than even they or any of them ventured to ask for; that more has been done in late years than has been done in all the years before; and that the greatest remedial measure of all was passed in the last session of Parliament under this Government, which is denounced as Conservative, and reactionary, and brutal, and oppressive, but which has yet placed the Irish tenant in a position which is more favourable than that of any agricultural tenant on the whole face of the globe. Now, I say, under these circumstances surely we are justified in insisting that the English peasant and the Scottish tenant should

also have their turn, and that the artisans of our great towns, the industrious law-abiding population of the working classes, should also have their fair share of the attention of Parliament. I think that we should be foolish indeed, we should be altogether unjust to our constituents, if we permitted this Irish question again to absorb the whole energies and the whole attention of Parliament. But while I say that, I am not so foolish as to imagine that it is desirable, even if it were possible, that Ireland should be altogether excluded from consideration.

No, gentlemen, the Irish question is still unsettled. Three times within our recollection a great policy has been introduced and recommended by Mr. Gladstone with this special object, and we have been assured that if only we would give it a favourable reception all our difficulties in that country would vanish. On two separate occasions the policy has been tried, and, unfortunately, it has failed. On the third occasion the prescription was rejected, and it is now withdrawn by the great physician, who tells us, however, that he has a fourth specific in his pharmacopœia, although he absolutely refuses to disclose the ingredients. Well, I confess, I am very sorry that Mr. Gladstone should preserve this policy of mystery. I regret that for tactical and for strategical reasons he should refuse to take the people of England into his confidence. I thought it was part of the Liberal creed to trust the people. The new Liberal doctrine is to trick them. If Mr. Gladstone would open his hand, if he would show what he has got under his hat, we might perhaps all be able to agree with him, and I am sure none would be more delighted than the Liberal Unionists and the Radical Unionists. But he appears to rely upon the readiness of his faithful followers to accept without consideration anything which, at what he considers the proper time, he may propose to them as his future policy. I regret it, because I think that this concealment is unfair to the country, unfair to his opponents, and I would say also unfair to his followers, although they seem to be perfectly satisfied. But I regret it also because I think that the present is a

good time for the careful and impartial consideration of this great problem with which, after all, English statesmen will have to deal.

Whatever the Home Rulers may say, however they may boast themselves, however loudly they may whistle to keep up their spirits, they know perfectly well that the game of disorder is, for the time at all events, 'up' in Ireland. Their policy has been openly avowed. They told us frankly that they intended to make government impossible in Ireland and the Government has beaten them. They tried to keep up the agitation by a policy which Mr. Gladstone himself described a year or two ago as a policy of public plunder, and they supported and maintained this policy by wholesale intimidation and violence. They forced the Government to introduce the Crimes Act, which no doubt was one of their objects; and having done so, they trusted that the English democracy, in its dislike of all coercion, would consent even to the abrogation of law. Well, gentlemen, they have mistaken the temper of the English democracy. The democracy may be in favour of liberty—I hope and I believe it always will be—but it is not in favour of licence, and the result has been that their agitation against the Crimes Act has been a failure, and that the Crimes Act itself has been successful, and practically the resistance to law has been put an end to, at all events for a time. And now, when the triumph of the Government has been assured, we find Mr. Parnell at the Eighty Club repudiating the Plan of Campaign; we find Mr. Gladstone vaguely disapproving of it; and we find this iniquitous policy, together with the equally scandalous boycotting by which it was supported, denounced emphatically by the Church to which the majority of Irishmen owe allegiance. I am glad that that condemnation has come at last, although it only follows the condemnation which was passed upon this policy months—I might say almost years—ago by every honest man. Under these circumstances we have, I think, some reason to hope that the great majority of the people of Ireland will return to honest industry, and that they will seek to appropriate

the great benefits of the legislation which has been passed for their advantage; and we have, therefore, a breathing space before us, of which, I hold, that we ought to take advantage. I hold it to be the duty of English statesmen to seek and to find a solution of this question which has been before us now for generations, and which will rise again at no distant date, if we do not find the means of laying this spectre.

I am glad, therefore, that within the last few days a great provincial organ in this town, the *Daily Post*, has opened its columns to the discussion of the question. I should like, in dealing with the subject which they have raised, to point out to you, in the first place, that the matter is brought before you for discussion; that it is not presented as a cut and dried policy which has to be accepted under fear of ulterior consequences. Every Unionist, whether Liberal or Conservative, must be anxious to escape this labyrinth of Irish disaffection, but there is no pretension put forward, as far as I can see, in the articles to which I am referring—there is no pretension on the part of any one to force this policy either on the Government or upon any section of the Unionist party. All that any one is entitled to ask is that the opportunity shall be taken to discuss the whole matter with an unprejudiced mind, in order that hereafter we may not be taken unprepared, and that we may not be asked to accept a policy which has not been fully considered. In the second place, I would say that this policy, which has rather fluttered the dovecotes in some quarters, is not, as has been represented, in any sense a new departure, but so far as the general principles and the main lines go, there is nothing in this policy which has been presented to you which I for one would not have been willing to accept any time within the last ten years, and I very much doubt, if I live to be twenty years older, whether I shall be willing to accept anything more. But what is of still greater importance, if you will read these suggestions carefully you will find that many of them are based upon indications which have been given by other Unionist leaders—by Lord Hartington, by

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, by Sir Henry James, and by Lord Randolph Churchill. And although I do not suppose for a moment that either of these would accept as a whole or in its entirety the scheme which has been put forward, yet it is clear to me that the writer of the article has collected these suggestions, not invented them, and that he has put them together as a complete whole for the consideration of the country, and especially of the Unionist party.

Now let us look at the suggestions themselves. There are three cardinal considerations which underlie them, and which I desire to impress upon your attention. In the first place, that the root of the difficulty in Ireland is to be found in economic and agrarian questions: that is a point which you ought never to lose sight of. Ireland is a very poor country; the great majority of its population have for generations been engaged in a struggle for existence. Is it wonderful that discontent should be rife, and is it not certain that if you can do anything to make that struggle for existence less bitter and more hopeful, you will do more for the pacification of Ireland than by any political scheme or any constitutional change? And hence it is, gentlemen, that a prominent place is given in this scheme to the development of the material interests of Ireland, to the promotion of its communications, of its fisheries, of its harbours, and of its public works generally. I see it is said that any scheme of this kind would be imprudent and contrary to the principles that have been adopted in England. But then, gentlemen, you must bear in mind that England is a very rich country, and that in consequence of its riches it has been able to do what no other country in the world has succeeded in accomplishing. England is the only country in the world whose public works have been carried on without public assistance. In America, on the continent of Europe, in all our self-governing colonies, public works have been maintained or aided by the assistance of the State. Now, I have always held that the union between England and Ireland was beneficial to Ireland, because it would offer all the advantages which the capital and assistance of a rich country could give

to a poor one ; but it would be, in my opinion, most unfair to Ireland if you were to say to her that because of her position in connection with this country she was to be deprived of the stimulus to her public works which otherwise would certainly be given to her if she were independent. It seems to me that if we are to preserve the Union we ought to treat Ireland at least as generously as any Home Rule Parliament would treat her. It is not an unreasonable demand which she makes. I have stated that every other country in the world has had to have recourse to State assistance. Take our own homely illustration ? Where would you be in Birmingham but for corporate aid ? How many of the great improvements of which we are all proud, improvements in our streets, our parks, our libraries, our museums ; how many of these great investments of the people of Birmingham would ever have seen the light but for corporate aid and corporate assistance ? I believe that the investment of public money in Irish public works could be shown to be profitable. If I had time I believe I could prove to you that at least there was as good a prospect for it as there was in Birmingham when, years ago, we undertook the control and management and acquisition of the gas and water works. What is wanted, gentlemen, is an improvement scheme for Ireland, conducted by national resources, as we had an improvement scheme in Birmingham, conducted by local resources. And if this were done, I am convinced that we should cut from under the feet of the agitators one of the great grounds of grievance which they have against the British connection, and that we should give a great impetus to employment and enterprise in that country, which would react favourably upon the political situation.

Well, then, the second proposal which is offered to us is one for the settlement of the land question. Hitherto we have trifled with the question ; we have only scratched on the surface ; we have never dealt with it thoroughly and radically. And we shall never have done so until we have transformed the great majority of the occupiers of land into

the owners of the soil they till. Now I think that every one, men of all parties, are agreed that this is a desirable object; they are agreed that it ought to be attained. Mr. Gladstone put it foremost in his latest scheme for the settlement of the Irish difficulty, and Mr. Morley has never ceased to declare that the settlement of the land question, in his opinion, ought to be made to precede, or to be concurrent with, the settlement of the Home Rule question. Well, but then there is almost an equal agreement that this great object, desirable as it is, must not be secured at the expense or at the risk of the British taxpayer. I do not think that that is a question which is worth arguing. The only people who hold a different opinion, so far as I have been able to see, are the landlords of Ireland. And, although I do not want to confiscate their property, I do not intend, if I can help it, that they shall confiscate yours or mine. Now the proposal in the *Daily Post* is that this great object, which, as I say, everybody agrees to be desirable, shall be carried out by Irish credit and Irish resources. I think it would be wise for those who have criticised this scheme to wait until it is fully explained. It is evident from what I have seen that they have not up to the present time completely understood it. I take it that the proposal professes to give to the Irish landlord an unimpeachable security for the capital value of his land, and at the same time it proposes to base that security upon Irish resources, and not upon British resources. Now, without entering upon details at this moment, all I will say to you is that if this can be done —if this be feasible, if it can be shown hereafter that it can be worked out in a practical way—the question of the land may be considered as solved, and I would advise the Gladstonian organs not to be too prompt in declaring it to be impossible, or else they may have to swallow their words once more. I would invite them to read a speech which was delivered, I think, at Mr. Barran's house, but which, at all events, was delivered by Mr. Gladstone, and in which he said that since the introduction of his own Land Bill—which he admitted was now withdrawn—he had

further considered the subject, and he had come to the conclusion that it would be possible to buy out the Irish landlords without having recourse to British credit. Of course I do not know what his scheme is, nor whether it is the same scheme as that in the *Daily Post*, but at all events I think the Gladstonian papers will feel that it would be premature to declare that the thing itself is impossible, when their great prophet has already assured them that he can do it if they will give him the opportunity.

Well then, gentlemen, we come to the third and last branch of the subject, the question of local government. Now I have always held, and I think it must be evident, that if the land question were settled, the difficulties attending local government would almost entirely vanish. What is now unsafe, what is now difficult, what is now impossible would then become perfectly natural and reasonable. You have only to ask yourselves what would be your view, supposing it were proposed to give local government to Scotland. I imagine that you would be prepared, as I should be, to give to the people of Scotland almost anything that they might wish to have. We are so confident that they would not abuse the powers which would be conceded to them, we are so confident of their loyalty, of their devotion to the Union and to the British Crown, and we are so confident of their high sense of honesty and morality that we feel assured they would not do injustice to a minority, however small. If we could introduce the same state of things in Ireland we should have the same feeling about local government in Ireland that we now have about local government in Scotland. If we could do away with the perpetual conflict which has lasted for I know not how long between the minority of landlords and the majority of tenants, if we could take away the interest which the tenants unfortunately have in the confiscation of the property of their landlords, in that case we should have removed the great cause of irritation and danger, and then our path would be smooth, and we should find very little difficulty in dealing with local government in so liberal and generous

a measure that every reasonable and patriotic man would be amply satisfied. When Irishmen have common rights and common obligations as citizens, we may expect that they will perform their civic duties. At present, unfortunately, their interests are against the performance of their legal obligations, and their virtue is not proof against the temptation to transfer the property of others into their own pockets. But you will see—and this is the second cardinal point in the scheme which I am considering—that the settlement of the land question must precede the reform of local government. It would not be safe to extend local government in Ireland until we have dealt finally and satisfactorily with the land question. When we have done that, I do not think there would be much difference of opinion as to the extent of the liberties we might grant to Ireland—as to the extent to which she might be permitted, under the authority of the Imperial Parliament, to control her local and domestic business. There may be at this moment some divergence as to the exact form which this local government should take—whether county boards should be supplemented by provincial councils, or in what way we should deal with those interests which extend beyond the county, and which are in some sort national in their nature.

But—and this is the last point which I want to impress upon you—the difference between the scheme which is put before you in the *Daily Post* and any scheme which has hitherto had the sanction of Mr. Gladstone is this—that the former does not recognise, and for my part I never will recognise, a separate political nationality in Ireland. Gentlemen, I beg you to bear this distinction in mind. If you ever are willing to recognise the political nationality of Ireland—I do not speak of the sentimental nationality—but if you are willing to accept the political nationality of Ireland, you must accept all the logical consequences of that admission. You must give to Ireland all the prerogatives of a separate nation ; you must give to it a separate Parliament, as Mr. Gladstone proposes ; you must give to it a separate executive, as Mr. Gladstone proposes. But

you must give to it more than Mr. Gladstone proposes. You must give to it a separate church, and separate customs, and a separate army; and be sure of this, that if you take the first step you will not be able to refuse to take the succeeding one. It was this, in my mind, which constituted a fatal objection to Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill; and it is by this we ought to be prepared to test any further proposals which he may make at any future time. Now, gentlemen, I do not propose to-night to enter more in detail upon the scheme which has been submitted to us.

But I would say to the Gladstonian Liberals that it is not enough for them to criticise this scheme or to disapprove of it; they must tell us what they would substitute for it. It is no use saying that they are afraid of falling into a trap. We have shown, at all events, that we have more courage than they. We have put forward for discussion—although not necessarily for acceptance—we have put forward for discussion and criticism our plan. It may not be a good one; let them show that they have a better. Till they do that we must conclude that they have no plan but the old one; we must conclude that they intend once more, if they can, to surprise the people of this country, and to carry by a rush what they know they could never gain from their sober judgment. I remember a good number of years ago Mr. Miall, who was then the leader of Nonconformity, telling Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons that there was a proverb, 'Once bitten, twice shy.' That proverb is applicable to the present occasion also, and I do not believe the people of this country will lend themselves again to the concealment which has already so nearly had such disastrous results. We ask for a declaration of policy from the man who claims to be the leader of the Liberal party; we ask that he shall not attempt to get into power upon side issues, while he refuses to tell us what is his programme in reference to the greatest question of all, the one which will absorb all others, when we give him our votes. Gentlemen, I ask, then, from the Gladstonian Liberals that they shall be constructive as well as destructive.

Let them show, if they like, that we do not know our business, that the wise men of Birmingham have no plan of Irish policy which can be considered for a moment; let them take pity upon our ignorance, and let them show us at the same time what better things they have in store for us. Then, gentlemen, on the Unionist party, whether they be Liberal or Conservative, I would respectfully urge that they shall take advantage of the respite which the firm action of the Government has given to us in order to consider all the conditions of this problem without prejudice, with fairness, and with full opportunity; and that they shall endeavour to see if it be not possible to satisfy every reasonable demand of patriotic Irishmen, to remove every ascertained Irish grievance, without impairing the authority of the Imperial Parliament, without endangering the security of the commonwealth of Great Britain and Ireland, which is the keystone and the centre of the mighty fabric of the empire that recognises the sway and authority of the Queen.

## IV. THE UNIONIST ALLIANCE: SPEECHES MAINLY FOREIGN AND COLONIAL

'I KNOW only two parties,' said Mr. Chamberlain on May 28, 1888, addressing the first meeting of the newly formed Liberal-Unionist Association of Birmingham; 'one is the National and Unionist Party.'

To this party he now definitely belonged. The cleavage, he had said a year before, had become irreparable, and he was reconciled to 'being taunted with an alliance with the Tories. I look beyond mere party considerations. The Government may be Tory, but if its measures are Liberal, I am prepared to discuss them on their merits, and without regard to past controversies.'

Yet this result, with its steady growth of mutual confidence and give-and-take, was not immediately, or easily, arrived at. The General Election of July 1886 had resulted in a majority for the Conservatives (316) of 37 over the Gladstonians (194) combined with the Nationalists (85). This majority did not include 75 Liberal-Unionists whose influence henceforward was naturally formidable. Lord Salisbury, who now formed his second administration, would have made of the alliance a coalition; but the Liberal-Unionists preferred to give their help and use their influence from outside. Their followers and the Conservatives had still to draw together, and their own several attitudes were not identical. At the meeting at Devonshire House, on August 5, which decided their party policy, Mr. Chamberlain, anxious for his social programme, was distinctly more hopeful and emphatic than was Lord Hartington upon the prospects of Liberal reunion. The Round Table Conference (see p. 236) was yet to be tried, with other patient expedients which might redeem what was, in fact, beyond recovery—to be tried and to fail. The issue was separation final and confessed. Mr.

Chamberlain turned from what he had once conceived to be the party of progress, carried his domestic policy to his former foes, and, before the Conservative Government went out in 1892, had seen a great part of it become domestic legislation. But in the session of 1886-7, with the unauthorised programme fresh in their ears and unconsidered on its merits, the Conservatives and Mr. Chamberlain were not yet in sympathy, nor was his own position wholly comfortable; and there may be something in the belief that it was generally thought convenient that he should withdraw for a little from current controversy, and return later to take up his new position in a cooler air. Such an opportunity, of memorable consequence to his public (and personal) fortune, presented itself in the autumn of 1887. The hundred year old dispute between Great Britain and the United States over the Canadian and Newfoundland fisheries had occurred both to Lord Salisbury and to President Cleveland as one which might well and easily be settled. A new commission was appointed, and Mr. Chamberlain was invited by Lord Salisbury to become chief British plenipotentiary, with Sir C. Sackville West, then Ambassador at Washington, and Sir Charles Tupper as his colleagues. This choice of a statesman who was also a man of business was soon and amply justified. After three months of study and inquiry on the spot, an equitable agreement was arranged, removing, not without liberal concessions on the part of Great Britain, a recurrent source of friction. The draft treaty was signed at Washington on February 15, 1888; but the Irish-American vote had been for months invoked and ordered against Mr. Chamberlain for his part in the defeat of Home Rule, and the Senate refused to ratify it. The Plenipotentiary, however, had further arranged a *modus vivendi* pending the ratification of the Senate, by which American fishing-vessels received the advantages provided in the treaty. This was brought into immediate operation, and, unaffected by the vote of the Senate, continued to regulate the attitude of the two countries. Mr. Chamberlain returned to England in March 1888, with his own reputation enhanced, and his mission

approved for its success in maintaining satisfactory relations with the United States.

The visit marks a stage in his own development, reflected in the speeches which he delivered on his return, and during the interval before his accession to office. Already, in April 1888, at the dinner given in his welcome, he is obviously impressed with the value and responsibilities of our colonial possessions, and is revolving problems like federation and commercial and defensive union. Yet a little, and in a note of profound and convinced Imperialism, he is pleading with Mr. Gladstone's Government the duty and expediency of holding a steady course in Uganda. The sense of Imperial duty which, for good or evil, had commonly been imputed to Mr. Chamberlain, was now conspicuous and audible as it had not been before, and as it was to be developed later. It was already no far cry to the 'missionary of Empire' and the crusade which began in 1903. Nor was the twin-objective of social reform neglected meanwhile. It has been seen that this was pursued through Lord Salisbury's second administration, and, from Mr. Chamberlain's own point of view, with a success surely beyond his hopes, yet in an entire harmony of co-operation. It was pursued in opposition; for in July 1892 the General Election returned Mr. Gladstone—succeeded later by Lord Rosebery—to office, with a combined Liberal and Nationalist majority of 42 over the allied Unionists. A second Home Rule Bill bobbed up, and Mr. Chamberlain's opposition was renewed with the same activity and force with which he had met its predecessor. But otherwise his chief preoccupation was in social reform,—in criticisms of the Employers' Liability Act which foreshadowed his own improved legislation of next year, and in formulating and preaching his scheme of old age pensions. And if the last was not carried, on the return of the Conservatives to power in 1905, its author's social programme was borne further stages in Lord Salisbury's third administration. Upon all accounts the situation recalls the observation of an early contemporary already quoted, that it was doubtful whether foreign affairs would

make of Mr. Chamberlain a Tory, or home policy make him a Radical. In the 'National and Unionist Party' of his own description he had found scope and service alike for his domestic and his imperialistic ideals. Although the choice of post for him surprised the uninformed, it was, in fact, a natural culmination when, on the defeat of Lord Rosebery in 1895, Mr. Chamberlain took office under a Conservative Prime Minister.

In Mr. Chamberlain's tenure of office as Colonial Secretary, the affairs of South Africa make a conspicuous mark. They awaited his coming to Downing Street, they made violent entry upon him in the last hours of 1895; after the most critical developments, they were still his concern on the eve of his resignation in 1903. The Jameson Raid, the consequent parliamentary inquiry, the war itself, and the process of reconstruction after the war are sufficiently considered in Mr. Chamberlain's speeches of October 1899 and February 1900 (vol. ii. pp. 11, 52), and in the extracts from the series delivered in South Africa. The country generally was behind the Colonial Secretary in his solemn claim in the first of these: 'In our endeavour to maintain peace we have shown the utmost conciliation. We have shown endless patience. We have run some risk; but we have never been prepared, from first to last, either to betray our countrymen or to allow their paramountcy to be taken from us. President Kruger has settled the issue. He has appealed to the god of battles. And I say, with all reverence and gravity, we accept the appeal, believing that we have our quarrel just . . .' All that need be noted here is that absorbed as was so much of his time and energy, amid that great strain and preoccupation he could give time and a rigorous attention to other and essential claims of office. In the West Indies he had found the sugar industry suffering from the invasion of continental beet importers propped up by the bonuses of their several governments. He was prompt in applying remedies good and good enough; but these were accounted less than the warmth with which Mr. Chamberlain pressed on home audiences the responsibilities of the

mother country. South Africa, in a measure, 'canalised' the Colonial Secretary. But his entry and tenure of office no doubt was based on two principles—closer relations for the self-governing dominions to ourselves, and 'the development of the resources of the Crown Colonies' by an increase of our trade with them. In this spirit he backed railway and telegraphic communication in West Africa, and carried (in 1900), after six months' exercise of unwearied patience and firmness in smoothing difficulties between the Imperial authorities and the colonial delegates, the Australian Commonwealth Act. Minor measures to the same end were the formation of the London and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, begun in 1899. For himself, as he told the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire assembled in June 1896, 'all this was subsidiary to and part of one end. Even Imperial defence is only another name for the protection of Imperial commerce. Gradually we approach to a result which would be little, if at all, distinguished from a real federation of the Empire. In my personal opinion this is a question which dominates all other Imperial interests. The establishment of commercial union throughout the Empire would not only be the first step, but the decisive step towards the realisation of the most inspiring idea that has ever entered into the minds of British statesmen.'

But more than any one measure, or enactment, or individual feature of Mr. Chamberlain's policy was the new spirit which he brought to the administration of his new post in 1895. That marked a turning-point in the history alike of the Colonial Office and of the relations between Great Britain and the Dominions and Crown Colonies. A new epoch begins with his speeches from 1895 onwards, and with that unwonted attitude which he both practised and enjoined towards colonial questions and colonial visitors. The Diamond Jubilee of 1897 and the welcome extended to the Colonial Premiers bore their fruit soon enough in the rallying of the Dominions to the mother country in an hour of stress and danger, and the seed then sown is still fruitful.

Controversy envelops Mr. Chamberlain's favourite plans and methods for bringing about the closer and commercial union of the Empire. But some things are beyond controversy. The partnership of Britain and her colonies, the improving of the common Imperial 'estates,' a warm and sympathetic interest instead of the old indifference at headquarters, and the study of facts replacing ignorance, not least a vigilant, sympathetic eye for the uncheered, faithful labourers of the colonial service—these were all part of a new constructive statesmanship identified with one name. Mr. Chamberlain and 1895, the name, the year, are writ in red letters at the Colonial Office.

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## RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THE COLONIES

### Devonshire Club, April 9, 1888

[On his return from America, and to mark the completion of his mission over North American fisheries, Mr. Chamberlain was entertained by the Devonshire Club at a house dinner; his health was proposed by Lord Granville. In returning thanks in the following speech, Mr. Chamberlain's references to the United States produced an excellent effect in America at the time. His words on the Dominions and the duty of strengthening our ties with them emphasise the need of a concerted scheme of defence, and foreshadow—years before that event or even before his becoming Colonial Secretary—Mr. Chamberlain's gradual conversion to the Dominion view as to the best means of developing inter-imperial trade in the interests of closer union.]

I THANK you very much for the warmth of your reception, and for the kindness with which you have honoured the toast which has been proposed by Lord Granville. I appreciate fully the unusual character of this gathering. I am very glad to see so many of my old colleagues, and friends, and fellow-workers, from whom I am temporarily dissociated by a difference which I regret as much as they can do. I think from their presence here to-night, as well as from the speech to which we have just listened, that I may venture to assume two things. In the first place, that, in spite of divergencies of the most important character

upon political and domestic questions, there is no intermission of the personal regard and goodwill which has been cemented by a long previous acquaintance. In the second place, that every Englishman who is worthy of the name sympathises with the objects of my recent mission, approves of such measure of success as has been already obtained, and is eager for a final settlement which shall remove all causes of difference between the United States and ourselves.

I confess, my lord, that your hospitality to-night places me in a somewhat embarrassing position. I do not pretend that I am able to glide over thin ice with such skill as yourself. I feel, as far as I am concerned, that it would be better for me to forget for one evening all subjects of party or sectional character. At the same time, the most ordinary diplomatic discretion precludes me from saying anything of importance about the negotiations or about the treaty which is now under the consideration of the Legislatures of the countries chiefly concerned. In these circumstances I can sympathise with Figaro in the comedy of Beaumarchais, who undertook to edit a journal under the conditions that he was to say nothing against the Government, nothing about politics, nothing about morality or religion, nothing against men in office, and nothing about any one who had any interest in anything. He endeavoured, I remember, to get out of his difficulty by calling his newspaper a *journal inutile*. If, my lord, to-night I have to pronounce a *discours inutile*, I think I may claim some excuse; but, whatever may be my personal difficulties, I do not think this representative demonstration can possibly be considered as useless. It is, as you have pointed out, a significant fact. It marks the change that has taken place in public opinion in this country in the course of the last quarter of a century. It is quite curious to look back to the time of the great Civil War and to the opinions which were then expressed by distinguished statesmen and writers on both sides of politics. They were animated by a sincere dread lest the United States should become a great aggressive Power, dangerous

to the peace of the world ; and there is no doubt that they were genuinely afraid of the introduction in this country of American ideas and of American institutions.

Why, gentlemen, it is ludicrous to contrast the results as we know them with the fears and the anticipations of those too timid politicians. The United States of America in the interval which has elapsed has more than doubled its population, until at the present time it exceeds the whole English-speaking population of the British Empire. Yet, so far from being aggressive, it is the most pacific country in the world ; and it has shown the remarkable spectacle of a nation of sixty millions content with an army of 25,000 men, and a fleet which is barely sufficient to carry the national flag to the principal centres with which it has commercial intercourse.

As to the introduction of American institutions into this country, we all know that America has developed a conservatism which must be the envy of many people in the United Kingdom. Nowhere in the world is the authority of the law greater, is the respect for the law more universal. It is now over a century since they adopted the Constitution which then went far beyond the ideas of the governing classes of Europe. But now they have adhered to that Constitution with a persistency and a devotion unparalleled in history ; and there are many Americans who say that much of our recent legislation is unconstitutional and revolutionary. As to our practice, they are astonished at the mildness with which we meet the assaults upon the authority of Government. I do not know whether it is this devotion to their Constitution, or whether it is this respect for law, and this determination that the rule of the majority constitutionally expressed shall be respected by the minority, which has commended American institutions in this country ; but, at all events, I think that there is now an appreciation of American institutions, and of the American people, which, perhaps, did not exist a generation ago.

All the prejudice, all the ignorance I hope, and certainly

all the dislike, have vanished from the minds of Englishmen; and there is now among all parties, and among all sections, one universal feeling of goodwill and admiration, not untinged with envy, and a cordial desire for a hearty and for a durable friendship. That was the feeling which I considered myself specially commissioned to express in the conference at Washington.

As Lord Granville has said, I claim no triumph, and I sought no triumph. I should have thought it a mistake in politics, to speak of nothing higher. But I claim, in common with my colleagues, to have done our best to secure an equitable and a friendly arrangement. I do not think that this spirit was inconsistent with the maintenance of the great colonial interests which were committed to the charge of the British plenipotentiaries. I believe we all held it to be our duty to yield everything that good neighbourhood and the comity of nations could claim at our hands, while at the same time we held fast to treaty rights that long usage and equity and international law had sanctioned.

I believe that we have fulfilled the conditions that we laid down for ourselves in undertaking this mission. I see that Mr. Secretary Bayard, the statesman who holds the most important position in Mr. Cleveland's Government, says, in a letter that has been recently published, 'Conciliation and mutual neighbourly concession have together done their honourable and honest work in this treaty, and have paved the way for relations of amity and mutual advantage.' I believe that that opinion would express the view of the vast majority of the people of Canada. I have no doubt that it is in accordance with the opinion of the vast majority of the people of the United States; and I hope and trust that it will receive its final endorsement from the great representative bodies which have now to pronounce upon it. If that be done, when we have removed the local and temporary, although long-standing, causes of difference between us, then I think that we may trust to the good feeling and common interests, and more than all to the

common blood, and common origin, and common traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race, to preserve unbroken the amity and peace which are essential to the progress and civilisation of the world. In the case of the United States of America I hope for amity and peace, and I ask for nothing more. Our course has been marked out for us as separate and independent, but I hope as friendly, nations.

But is it necessary, is it desirable, that our relation with Canada, with our great colonies in Australasia and South Africa, should follow the same course, should result in a similar absolute independence? I am willing to submit to the charge of being a sentimentalist when I say that I will never willingly admit of any policy that will tend to weaken the ties between the different branches of the Anglo-Saxon race which form the British Empire and the vast dominion of the Queen. We all feel a natural pride in the restless energy and dauntless courage which have created this great Empire. We feel a satisfaction in the constant evidence which is given us of the affectionate attachment of our fellow-subjects throughout the world to their old home. It seems to me that it would be unpatriotic to do anything which would discourage this sentiment—that it would be cowardly and unworthy to repudiate the obligations and responsibilities which the situation entails upon us. I would be willing to put it on the lowest possible grounds. Experience teaches us that trade follows the flag, and even in commercial questions sentiment is a powerful influence on the question of profit and loss. A great part of our population is dependent at the present moment upon the interchange of commodities with our colonial fellow-subjects, and it is the duty of every statesman to do all in his power to maintain and increase this commercial intercourse, and to foster the attachment upon which to a large extent it is founded. We have to watch for opportunities to strengthen the ties between our colonies and ourselves. There is a word which I am almost afraid to mention. I have been assured upon the highest authority that confederation is an empty dream, the fantastic vision of fools and fanatics.

'It cannot be. The vision is too fair
For creatures doomed to breathe terrestrial air.
Yet not for that shall sober reason frown
Upon that promise, nor that hope disown.
We know that only to high aims are due
Rich guerdons, and to them alone ensue.'

I am well aware that up to the present time no practical scheme of federation has been submitted or suggested, but I do not think that such a scheme is impossible. There are two points which have to be prominently borne in mind. There is the question of commercial union and the question of union for defence. I have heard it argued that the colonies would be very foolish to allow themselves to become mixed up in our old-world policy, and to concern themselves with wars in which they can have no possible interest or advantage. But I may point to the action of the colonies not so very long ago in the case of the Egyptian war, when they exhibited a sentiment, which I think we should all be ready to appreciate, on an occasion in which they certainly had nothing but a sentimental interest. But I will go further. I suppose the colonists read history; and if they do, they will know that every great war in which this country has been engaged since the great French war at the beginning of the century, and that every dispute which has seriously threatened our peace, has arisen out of the concerns and interests of one or other of the colonies or of the great dependency of India. Under these circumstances it appears to me that it may be at least as much to the interests of the colonies, as to those of the mother country, that we should seek and find a concerted system of defence.

The difficulty in the case of commercial union is, no doubt, much greater. It is no use to expect that our colonies will abandon their custom duties as their chief and principal source of revenue. It is hardly to be hoped that the protected interests, fostered by their system, will willingly surrender the privileges which they now enjoy. All we can do is to wait until proposals are made to us; to con-

sider those proposals, when they come, with fairness and impartiality; and to accept them if they do not involve the sacrifice of any important principle or of any interest vital to our population.

Meanwhile, we ought not to do anything to discourage the affection, or to repel the patriotic and loyal advances of our fellow-subjects and fellow-kinsmen, who are proud of the glorious traditions of our country, who share with us our history, our origin, and our common citizenship in the greatest and freest empire that the world has ever known.

## DEATH OF JOHN BRIGHT

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 29, 1889

I HOPE the House will allow me to say a very few words on this subject. I shall not venture to add anything to what has already been spoken so eloquently and so feelingly by the leaders of parties in this House, as to Mr. Bright's claims to our admiration as a great popular leader, a great tribune of the people. It is only of the friend and of the colleague that I wish to say a few words. I have been personally acquainted with Mr. Bright for more than thirty years, almost from the day when he was elected for the first time as member for Birmingham. Since then he has occupied a position as a parliamentary representative which I think is unique in our history. He was returned in his absence while he was still prostrated by illness induced by overwork, and he was returned, as he always has been returned subsequently, without any pledge of any kind, and without any expense to himself. The only condition which was suggested to him was, that in order to mark the fact that the constituency considered that it was receiving and not conferring an obligation, he should feel himself always exempt from any claim to contribute in any way to our local institutions or to our political organisations; and that understanding has been observed in all its fullness down to the present time.

I venture to think that relations so begun and so maintained for a period of a generation are honourable alike to the constituency and to its great representative. I well remember the first speech which Mr. Bright addressed to his constituents in the autumn of 1857 in the Town Hall, Birmingham. He spoke in terms of great pathos of the illness from which he had just recovered, when, as he said, from a condition of apparent strength he had been brought to a condition exceeding the weakness of a little child. He spoke of the innumerable kindnesses he had received from all classes and conditions of his fellow-countrymen, and he went on to express the consolation it had been to him in his time of suffering to receive this proof of the confidence and the affection of the electors and population of the great central city of the kingdom. He said: 'I shall not attempt, by the employment of any elaborate phrases, to express to you what I felt at the time when you conferred upon me the signal honour of returning me as your representative to the House of Commons. I am not sufficiently master of the English language to discover words which shall express what I then felt, and what I feel now, towards you for what you did then, and for the reception which you have given me to-night. I never imagined for a moment that you were prepared to endorse all my opinions, or to sanction every political act with which I have been connected; but I accepted your resolution in choosing me as meaning this: that you had watched my political career, that you believed it had been an honest one, that you were satisfied that I had not swerved knowingly to the right hand or to the left, that the attractions of power had not turned me aside, that I had not changed my course from any view of courting a fleeting popularity; and, further, that you are of this opinion, an opinion which I religiously hold, that the man whose political career is on a line with his conscientious convictions can never be unfaithful to his constituents or to his country.' Mr. Speaker, the motives which Mr. Bright assigned as actuating his constituents in choosing him have continued from that day to determine their feelings towards

him, and now that he has passed away, now that, in a beautiful figure which he himself was the first to use, he has gone to join the great majority, those who differed from him are united with those who agreed with him in mourning his loss, in honouring his memory, and in respecting his courage, his consistency, and his honesty. The characteristics which distinguished his public action were equally conspicuous in his private life. Mr. Bright was a most loyal colleague, most considerate, most unselfish. He was, as many members of this House can testify, the most delightful company. He was always simple, always straightforward, always unmindful of himself. He was very strenuous in asserting the principles and the convictions which he held to be true and just, but with all his strength no one ever knew him to do an unfair or an ungenerous thing. I remember his once saying to me—it may seem almost trivial to recall it, but it was characteristic of the man—I remember his once saying to me that whenever he entered a strange house, if there were a dog or a cat in it, it always came to him directly and made good friends with him. I think these domestic animals are good judges of character, and I know—I am certain—that theirs was the only popularity which Mr. Bright ever courted.

I have no right to detain the House longer. I spoke because Mr. Bright was in a special sense the member for Birmingham, and because he has always enjoyed the affection and the reverence of every man and woman in that great community.

## 'NIHILISTS OF ENGLISH POLITICS'

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JULY 29, 1889

[From a speech in the course of a debate on Royal Grants.]

I DO not see why the honourable member should think it right to correct me, but he now says he has calculated, with the assistance of his actuarial friend, that the savings of the

Queen amount to £1,500,000 upon the Civil List, and without the assistance of his actuarial friend he has himself added to that amount an additional million and a half. This is not the first time that this question has been brought before the House. A somewhat similar debate occurred in this House in 1882, when the proposal for a grant to the Duke of Albany was brought forward. It was then contended that the Queen had resources from which such demands might be met. The right honourable member for Midlothian [1] on that occasion, in moving the grant, said :

'I hope, sir, it will not be said that provision for these purposes ought to be made by the Sovereign herself from her economies, in restraining the expenditure of her annual income, because it must be borne in mind that the income of the Sovereign is predetermined in separate branches and departments in such a way as only to leave the most moderate means for anything approaching accumulation. That accumulation, such as would even moderately provide for the Royal Princes and Princesses on their arrival at man's estate or on entering the condition of matrimony, is absolutely beyond the power of any Sovereign to attain. . . . My honourable friend says that the savings of the Sovereign ought to provide for these endowments. But, sir, that is totally impossible. There are no savings, and never have been, and never could be, which would be adequate to meet a tenth part of them. The savings of the Sovereign have never amounted to any inordinate sum, nor have they ever been considered a matter of parliamentary investigation. I have had some knowledge of them in various contingencies of official life, but never have they seemed to me to amount to more than might be well called for by the emergencies connected with the position and duties of the Queen. Were it only the very considerable inequality in the position of the various children of the Sovereign with respect to wealth, it is quite obvious that it would be most undesirable that her Majesty should be wholly deprived of the means of mitigating, should she think fit, that inequality.'

After a positive statement of that kind from my right honourable friend it is really presuming on the part of the honourable member for Sutherland to bring forward the calculation to which I have referred. One would think

[1] Mr. Gladstone.

that it would entirely preclude him from falling into the same ridiculous error into which he fell on a former occasion. Under these circumstances, if the savings of the Crown are moderate, if they are not such as would provide one-tenth part of the charge in connection with the younger children of the Sovereign, it is perfectly clear that they cannot be sufficient to provide for the demand now being made. I now come to a still more important question—namely, as to whether, at the settlement of the Civil List or subsequently, there was or was not any understanding with the Queen to provide for her descendants. This raises the question of notice, and I think the House will see that this is a question of the greatest importance, and a question which by itself may be considered to conclude the matter. The majority of the Committee take issue with the minority. We asserted that there had been no notice to the Queen, at any time, that she was expected to provide for her descendants. I have already referred to the amendments of the right honourable member for Midlothian which are opposed to paragraphs 11 and 12 of the original report. If any one will look at the draft report they will see, I think, that no one would object to paragraph 12 if paragraph 11 is held to be true, for paragraph 11 says that the Queen has never had notice that she was expected to make provision for her grandchildren. If she has never had notice, then the twelfth paragraph, which states that she had a claim, would recommend itself to the sense of the House. The important question is whether the Queen had notice of this or could be expected to know that this demand was to be made upon her. The amendment proposed by the right honourable member for Midlothian in lieu of paragraph 11 affirms :

'Your Committee cannot find in any resolution of the House of Commons, or in any declaration on behalf of the Government by a Minister of the Crown, any indication whether the practice followed in the case of grandchildren of George III. was to continue under the method now applied to the Civil List, or whether any and, if any, what obligation attached to the Sovereign with reference to descendants in the second generation, or what

claims the Sovereign might be entitled to make upon the national resources.'

It is perfectly evident that if it had been carried it would amount to this—that the Committee would give distinct expression to the opinion that they could find no indication of any notice having been given to the Sovereign, one way or the other. If there has been no notice to the Queen that the practice continued for three-quarters of a century is not to be followed, and if the Queen has not been specifically, directly, and definitely informed some time or other that she was expected to make these savings, then it is only natural she should assume, as every one else would, that she was not expected to make them, and that the practice which had been hitherto pursued would be continued. I wish to point out the importance of this, for if notice had been given it is possible, even probable, that the Queen would have ordered her expenditure from the Privy Purse on a different scale, and that the expenditure from the Civil List would be different from what it has been since she was led to understand that a provision for her children and descendants was not a matter for her concern. From our point of view we might have accepted the amendment of the right honourable member for Midlothian, but there is one reason why I could not accept it; for while it affirms that no notice has been given to the Queen that the practice would be discontinued, it also negatives the fact of any notice having been given that it would be continued. I maintain that notice has been given to the Queen in various ways by Ministers of the Crown from time to time that amply justify the Queen in believing that the practice would be continued. I will not make many quotations, but there is one I will give, because it occurred in my own time and within my own experience. I refer to what was said in 1885 by the right honourable member for Midlothian, on the occasion of proposing a grant to the Princess Beatrice. I am not going to try and commit my right honourable friend to any inferences I may draw from his words, but I am only going to ask the House

whether or not, in their opinion, the words would not convey to third persons the meaning I give them—namely, that they convey to the Crown that provision for descendants of the second generation would be made by Parliament. The right honourable member for Midlothian said :

'At the commencement, particularly, of the reign of William IV. and of the reign of her present Majesty, a careful investigation was made by a powerful and influential Committee of this House into the condition of the Civil List, the proper distribution of the expenditure, and the proper limits to be placed on the amount of that expenditure. This course of practice has been adopted as regards the Sovereign. As regards, not the Sovereign himself or herself, but those members of the Royal Family who stand in sufficiently close proximity to the Sovereign to become, according to our usage, the customary subjects of parliamentary provision, it has never yet been the practice to refer the consideration of the provision to be made for them to a Parliamentary Committee.'

According to my idea, the expression 'members of the Royal Family who stand in sufficiently close proximity to the Sovereign to become, according to our usage, the customary subjects of parliamentary provision,' must refer to grandchildren. They have, according to our uniform usage, been made the subjects of parliamentary provision. My right honourable friend went on to say :

'We have considered this matter, sir, and we are of opinion that it would be decidedly a public advantage and most consistent with the important considerations attaching to this subject if henceforth Parliament were to apply to these secondary provisions, if I may so call them—as compared, of course, I mean, with the provision for the Crown and the Heir to the Throne —if Parliament were to apply the same principles as have been applied in the case of the Royal Civil List ; and before the House of Commons hears of these proposals, a system on which they may well henceforward be founded should have been submitted by the Government to a Parliamentary Committee, and should have received the approval and sanction of that Committee.'

The right honourable member further says :

'Of course, the fact that we have now arrived at a resting

point, the whole subject of provision for the children of her Majesty being now disposed of, seemed to mark this particular moment as a proper moment at which the arrangements of the future might, with propriety, be taken into view, at least as to the principle and method of procedure.'

What inference can be drawn from that? The inference I drew at the time, and which I think any one would draw, was that this Committee was to be appointed to consider primarily what provision was to be made for the grandchildren, inasmuch as the question of provision for all the children of the Queen had been completely settled. It was for the purpose of settling that question that the Committee was to be appointed. The words of my right honourable friend gave the Queen to understand that the Government was prepared to submit a scheme for settling these claims. My argument is this, that in the state of things which existed, and in the face of the words of my right honourable friend, it was almost impossible for the Queen not to suppose that it was the intention of the then Government to propose a Parliamentary Committee to consider the whole question of parliamentary usage with regard to descendants of the second generation, and to make some proposal. Under these circumstances it was impossible for us to support the amendment of my right honourable friend, which distinctly negatived the inferences I have been pointing out, and, besides, it would have been most discourteous not to have received the waiver by the Queen of these claims by acknowledging that they might be supposed to exist, and that there was some liberality in their abandonment. I have only one other point upon which I wish to make any other observation, and that is with regard to the statement of the junior member for Northampton[1] that the total expenditure upon monarchy and monarchical institutions in this country amounted to £800,000 a year. I think that these figures will not bear close examination, but, assuming they are correct, I venture to assert that they are entirely irrelevant. In the first place, the greater proportion of this

[1] The late Mr. Labouchere.

expenditure is entirely independent of the personal will of the Sovereign; on the contrary, I believe that her desire would be best consulted by a considerable retrenchment. In the second place, a great deal of the expenditure is altogether independent of monarchy or monarchical institutions. Even under a republic, I suppose, where royal palaces exist they would be kept up by the State. That, at all events, is the case in France. Our royal palaces would have to be maintained, unless the honourable member for Northampton would like to see Buckingham Palace like the Tuileries, and Windsor Castle like St. Cloud. I am not certain, if this country became a republic to-morrow, that the friends of the republic would not be able to make out a good case on national grounds for the retention of State palaces and yachts. I am quite sure the junior member for Northampton will be candid enough to agree with me that a great deal of this expenditure is not fairly attributable to the monarchy, and, above all, is not attributable to the Queen. I am quite prepared to admit that there might be great retrenchment in some of this expenditure. I do not pretend to like ceremonial offices any better than the honourable member for Northampton. No doubt there are many points in which reductions might be made without in the slightest degree impairing the convenience of the Queen or the dignity and splendour of the State. The honourable member for Northampton very fairly said he did not wish to touch the Civil List during the present reign. The right honourable member for Newcastle [1] has to-night again pressed for reductions; and I must leave him to the answer of the right honourable member for Midlothian, who pointed out that it was impossible that the Queen, at her age, at the close of a long reign, should be expected to undertake these changes. I will not go farther than the honourable member for Northampton, who, more liberal than the right honourable member for Newcastle, did not wish to touch the Civil List during the present reign; but then I say it is not fair to raise the point until the time comes

[1] Mr. Morley.

when retrenchment is possible. If after the present reign the existing expenses are continued at the desire and will and in behoof of the Sovereign, the arguments that have been adduced would have some application. My impression is that the only thing we have to deal with is the personal income of the Queen; and what is that income? If the House will look at the four sources from which it is derived—the Duchy of Cornwall for four years, the Duchy of Lancaster during the whole term of the reign, the Privy Purse, and the so-called savings of the Civil List—they will find that the total income of the Queen has averaged £105,000 per annum. Is that an excessive amount for the Queen of the United Kingdom? I know it is very difficult to put this matter properly before a popular audience. The difficulty consists in finding something by which you may measure these large sums and the position of the Sovereign. If you are to take as a standard for the income of the Sovereign of England the income of the 'poor widow' or the 'poor pensioner' who have been put forward, of course £105,000 would be monstrous, and so would be the £50,000 that is taken by the French President, and so would be the £10,000 of the President of the United States. If you are to measure by other standards, by the greatness and the wealth of the country—if you are to measure by the standard of living which generally prevails—if you are to measure by comparison with other monarchies—I say the sum taken by the Queen is reasonable and even moderate. We are told that the people—the people with a capital P—think it exorbitant. We are told this by honourable members who profess on all occasions to speak for the people with a capital P—the honourable members for Northampton, Leicester, Sunderland, who never speak to us on any popular question without giving us to understand that in some special sense they have a mission to represent the People. Sir, I deny their claims. I should like to see their credentials. They represent only a majority, and in some cases it is a very small majority, in the constituencies which severally return them to this House. Yes;

they represent something else; they represent the class jealousies, the petty spite, and the enmities which they do their utmost to stimulate; they represent the superficial prejudices to which they truckle. An honourable member tells us it is a shameful thing to fawn upon a monarch; but it is a much more shameful thing to truckle to a multitude. Let these honourable members dare to tell the whole truth upon this matter to the people. Let them, instead of carping at the expenditure on Monarchy which is essential to the maintenance of the institution, tell the people that if they want a Monarchy they must pay for it; but let them tell also that their object in these endeavours is to belittle the Monarchy, to make it unpopular, and to prepare the way for destruction. Then we shall see whether the people, of whom we hear so much, who enjoy at least a measure of political liberty under all circumstances which is more democratic than exists in any republic of Europe or the world, whether the people will be willing, when they understand everything, to enter upon a contest which must be prolonged, which must be exasperated, to throw the Constitution into the melting-pot, to postpone altogether indefinitely all hope of practical and material reform in order to accept the programme of those who call themselves new Radicals—new because they have nothing in common with the old Radicals—who are destructive in their aims and objects, who have never shown the slightest constructive capacity, who are, in short, nothing more nor less than the Nihilists of English politics.

## THE FINDINGS OF THE PARNELL COMMISSION

### House of Commons, March 11, 1890

[On this day the findings of the Parnell Commission were brought before the House of Commons, and the First Lord of the Treasury proposed a resolution thanking the judges and adopting the report. In the course of the debate Mr. Chamberlain spoke in favour of the resolution. He

began by examining the character of the Tribunal and of its inquiry, both of which he praised, and continued :]

. . . THE Government asks the House to discharge a ministerial function, to adopt a report and not to pronounce a judicial opinion. But by the amendments you are asked to take the findings of fact of the judges, to deal with them, to distinguish between them, and to pronounce your own judgment upon them. . . . I vote for the resolution of the Government, because it does not ask us to pronounce a judicial opinion, but it leaves that to the nation. You have confidence in the nation. You believe that it will do you justice. Then why do you not leave it in their hands? Now I must touch upon another statement of the noble lord, which was, I think, in continuation of a statement made by the right honourable member for Midlothian. It has been said by both that this report is a vote of censure; that by adopting it you are condemning honourable members, your colleagues in this House. I deny that altogether. We have been told by every speaker on this side that this report is a triumphal acquittal upon every charge. How can a triumphal acquittal be a vote of censure? I go further, and say that by adopting the report we adopt, as I have said, only the findings of fact as they are put before us by the judges; we adopt them as the nearest approach to truth that we can get in this matter. But I do not find in the report one single word of condemnation from the judges; from one end of the report to the other it is an impartial judicial statement—such things were done, such words were used, such consequences followed; as to whether good or bad, laudable or to be reprobated, the judges do not say one word. By adopting the report you do not say either. I do not mean that you may not say a good deal by way of complement to this report. All I point out is what cannot be contradicted as to the position of the question, and the issue we are asked to adopt. If you stop at what the Government proposes you pronounce neither censure nor praise. In all inquiries of this kind there are necessarily two stages: the first is the finding of the facts;

the second is the appreciation of the findings. That is what we are called upon to do. It is said that the judges were precluded from taking into account political and historical considerations, and these political and historical considerations are essential before pronouncing finally on the matter, as they may turn things which would otherwise be offences into praiseworthy acts. That I admit. I say it was not for the judges to do that. If it is your opinion that judgment should be pronounced on the findings of the commission, then I say that your judgment upon the whole report should be a full comment upon the findings, and not upon those particular portions of the report which seem to suit your present circumstances. I will not say more. What I have said applies to the amendment in the name of the honourable member for Loughborough as well as to the amendment of the honourable member for Stockport. If I had to choose between any of these amendments I should say that his is the least objectionable. Undoubtedly the offences of which the respondents have been acquitted are more serious, more infamous, and more damaging charges than the charges which have been proved against them. Therefore, if you are to pick out any part of the report at all you should pick out that part which contains the most important charges. But why should you pick out one part and not accept the whole ? If, as you contend, the whole report is a verdict of acquittal, and if after taking into account the pleas of palliation which have been put forward, you can say that the action of the respondents has been, on the whole, laudable, why do you not profess to deal with the report in that sense ? I listened with the greatest admiration to the speech of my honourable and learned friend the member for Hackney.[1] He is a great forensic advocate, but I do not think that that was the speech of an advocate. It was not a speech made from a brief or from instructions. It was a speech made from his heart and conscience. But my honourable and learned friend, if he had chosen, might have produced an amendment in the very words of that speech—an amend-

[1] Sir Charles Russell, later Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief-Justice.

ment which I believe would have been practically accepted with unanimity by the House. In the course of that speech my honourable and learned friend spoke of his loathing for crime and assassination, and condemned in the strongest terms intimidation in any shape or form. He deplored the excesses by which a great popular movement had been stained, and regretted that the leaders of that movement had failed in any respect to denounce intimidation. Well, if he had been willing, and had seen his way to draw up an amendment in which that reference was made to some of the findings of the report, he might have taken his choice of the other amendments before the House, which declared the satisfaction of the House at the acquittal of the honourable members on still graver charges. But we are asked to pick and choose. We are to treat some findings as being of no importance and others as being of supreme importance, and requiring particular notice. I am bound, even at the risk of wearying the House, to examine once more the character of those findings which we are asked to ignore. There is no doubt about the findings which acquit the respondents. Every one admits gladly that the respondents have been completely acquitted of personal complicity with crime. But these are not the only charges against them, as there are other charges which they themselves demanded should be inquired into. They asked that the charges in *Parnellism and Crime*, including abstention from condemnation of crime, connivance with crime, and indirect but moral complicity with crime, should be inquired into. Let me examine the findings of the judges in reference to this matter. The speech of the honourable member for West Belfast [1] was a sort of *apologia pro vitâ suâ*, and, if it were to be accepted, it is not condemnation which is due to honourable members, but we ought to pass a resolution declaring that the honourable member and his friends had deserved well of their country. The honourable and learned member for East Fife [2] took under his special protection the other day the Clan-na-Gael. The Clan-na-Gael, it appears, is a friendly

[1] Mr. Sexton. [2] Mr. Asquith.

society. Well, if it is a friendly society, the Land League and the National League must be philanthropic associations for preventing murder and outrage. That, however, would need a little closer examination. I pass over the findings as to conspiracy and what is called the charge of treason. I admit that I attach no importance to it in the present debate. It is perfectly true that conspiracy of the kind which is proved, conspiracy to obtain independence, is not a crime as we understand it. It is no personal dishonour to a man. In the history of Ireland, ay, and in the history of England, men have been guilty of similar conspiracy to secure independence—which can be called treason, but for which they are now held in high honour and esteem. The only importance I attach to that finding is a political importance. I do not gather that at the time when this conspiracy was going on—it is pretended now that it has been since abandoned—it was announced to the world by the honourable members engaged in it. It was not their professed object. It was cloaked and concealed by what they called the constitutional agitation. What guarantee have we that the same thing is not going on now? What proof have we that if Home Rule is granted we shall not find behind it the Fenian organisation using Home Rule as a first step to independence? And now I come to what I think is the real issue—the findings numbered 4 and 9 in the report. What is it which has been contended with reference to these findings? In the first place, it is said that they are findings in the nature of matters of opinion, and that they can be classified and distinguished in some way from the other evidence by which the respondents have been acquitted of the more serious offences. I say a moment's examination will show that the contention cannot be maintained. I defy any one to make a distinction in the findings between those which appear at first sight to be hostile and those which appear favourable. There is a finding that: 'It is not proved that payment was made to Byrne to enable him to escape from justice.' Is that a finding of fact or is it not? That must be a finding of fact. What do you say

to this? 'That payments were made to persons injured in the commission of crime.' I am not speaking of their respective gravity; I am only saying, Can it be pretended that one opinion is a matter of fact, and that the other, as the honourable member for Fife sneeringly observed, is 'an *obiter dictum* of the judges'? Thus you get the finding that some of the respondents did express *bona fide* disapproval of the crime. Is that a question of fact? If that is a question of fact, surely the other finding, that the respondents did not denounce intimidation leading to crime, even when they knew of its consequences, is also a matter of fact. You can make a distinction in the gravity of the findings, but you cannot make any distinction in their character. I will take one more. The finding of the court that acquits Mr. Parnell of all connection with the Invincible conspiracy is a finding of fact. But by what process of reason can you say that it is legitimate to accept a finding of that kind and reject a finding as to the co-operation and assistance which he has received from the Physical Force party? They stand on the same footing. They have equal authority and equal weight, and you must either reject all the findings or accept them all. There is a much more serious contention, if true. It is said that these findings related to venial and trivial offences. Let us see what they are. There are three findings which stand together. The finding that the respondents invited and obtained the assistance and co-operation of the Physical Force party; the finding that there was no denunciation by Mr. Parnell of the action of the Physical Force party; and lastly, the finding that Mr. Davitt was in close and intimate association with the party of violence in America. Is that a trivial offence? What was the Physical Force party? It was a party whose publicly avowed and professed object was to assassinate public men in this country and to lay our chief cities in ruins. And yet my honourable friend the member for Wolverhampton compared these transactions with the history of the agitations which led to the passing of the Reform Act and the repeal of the Corn Laws. I say there is no parallel

in these transactions to any popular or patriotic movement in the history of the world. There is no case in which men professing to carry on a constitutional agitation met their opponents in fair debate, and at the same time were in close and intimate alliance with men who by their published newspapers declared that their object was to assassinate those same opponents, and cause injury and ruin to the countrymen of those so-called constitutional leaders. Is no reparation due to us, who for months and years were followed by police even into our homes in order to protect us against the agents of the friendly society of the honourable member for East Fife? To compare action of this kind to the action of Bright and Cobden is simply an insult to the memory of those men. . . .

We are told that we ought to take into account the wrongs and misery of Ireland, and the valuable result in the way of legislation. I am willing to admit the force of these arguments, but they are outside the present question. I say that the wrongs and misery of Ireland might have justified agitation, and even might have been an excuse for insurrection; but they cannot justify outrage, and it is this that makes the distinction between the agitation of the honourable members opposite and those of Bright and Cobden. You may have had outbursts of popular agitation, but never before did you have an organised system of intimidation leading to crime. I think we are bound to make this protest, and to say that assassination and outrage of the character described are things which even an injured people have no right to employ. Mr. Davitt has pointed out that his hands, at all events, are absolutely clean in this matter, and in his speeches and in his address to the commissioners he has pointed out that these outrages were not only condemned by him, but that they were positively injurious to the agitation. With regard to the argument that we should take into account the result, I admit that the Land Bill could not have been passed without agitation, but I say that it did not need crime and outrage in order to pass the Land Bill or to back up the agitation. What we complain of is

crime and outrage, and not agitation. Then it is said that all these things are ancient history and do not go beyond the charges which were made by Mr. Forster in this House, or even those made by the right honourable gentlemen, the member for Midlothian and the member for Derby. That is true, perfectly true, and I believe that while every sensational calumny supplemented beyond what my right honourable friends alleged has failed, their original charges have been sustained. But when we made these charges and asked the House to pass stringent Coercion Acts on the ground that these charges were true, we did not think they were trivial and venial; and if they were not then, what has occurred since that time to make them so now? We said then that crime and outrage were illegitimate weapons of agitation, and that incitement to intimidation, however innocent in intention, was wrong. Why should we not have the same thing now; and if we are called upon to vote upon these findings, why should we not say so now? There is only this difference between then and now. At that time it might have been said that these grave charges had been put forward by political opponents, certainly by persons of different political convictions. Now they are made on the authority of a judicial tribunal and proved, and I say that it will be a supreme advantage of this commission that in the future it will be impossible for the leaders of any agitation, situated as honourable members below the gangway, to ignore or to pretend to ignore the consequences of action and language which have been conclusively proved and recorded against them.

## 'PEGGING OUT CLAIMS FOR POSTERITY'

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 20, 1893

[In December 1890, Captain Lugard, now Sir Frederick Lugard, Governor-General of Nigeria, came to terms with King Mwanga of Uganda, who signed a treaty acknowledging for two years the supremacy of the British East Africa Company. Constant intrigues within and from without his

territory induced Mwanga to back out of his bargain, and there was *émeute* and anarchy, stamped out by the resolution and capacity of Lugard. Meanwhile the Directors of the Company, with their comparatively small capital of half a million, and without the power to raise taxes, had become somewhat appalled at the dimensions of their burdens, and in 1891 gave it to be understood that it was their intention to retire from Uganda. They were induced to hold on, and in September 1892 the Foreign Office accepted the principle of evacuation, but offered assistance to the Company to prolong the occupation to the end of March 1893. In January 1893, Sir Gerald Portal, Her Majesty's representative at Zanzibar, was appointed to proceed to Uganda to inquire into the position, and to furnish information to Mr. Gladstone's Government to enable them to decide as to the course to be ultimately adopted. It was in connection with this expedition that Mr. Labouchere moved a reduction of £5000 in the estimates, and that Mr. Chamberlain made the following speech.]

. . . My honourable friend the member for Sunderland[1] said that he as a Radical—I may perhaps in passing say that there are Radicals and Radicals, and that, although I fully admit his claim to be a Radical, I hope he will admit that there are other Radicals who do not hold altogether with his opinions—was opposed to the expansion of the Empire, and that he would not spend a penny for any such object so long as there are poor and distressed and destitute persons at home for whom the money which can be afforded by the State might be expended with great advantage. That is a very important statement, and I should like to know how far it is likely to meet with general concurrence. I wonder, in the first place, how far my honourable friend's economy will carry him? Take, for instance, one of the subjects which we have been discussing to-night. We are spending at the present time £200,000 a year, which might be spent on the poor and destitute at home, in the endeavour to put down the slave-trade. Is my honourable friend prepared to move that that expenditure should cease?

Now, suppose this view, which he puts before the Committee, and which will not be accepted to-day by the majority of the Committee, had been put fifty or one hundred years ago, and suppose it had been accepted by the Parliament of that day. I ask myself what would now be the position of this country, what would be the position of

[1] Mr. S. Storey.

persons in the slums for whom my honourable friend has so much sympathy and feeling? Does my honourable friend believe, if it were not for the gigantic foreign trade that has been created by this policy of expansion, that we could subsist in this country in any kind of way—I do not say in luxury, but in the condition in which, at the present time, a great part of our population lives? Does he think that we could support in these small islands forty millions of people, without the trade by which a great part of our population earns its living—a trade which has been brought to us by the action of our ancestors, who in centuries past did not shrink from making sacrifices of blood and treasure, and who were not ashamed—if I may borrow the expression which has been referred to more than once to-night—to peg out claims for posterity? Are we, who enjoy the advantages of the sacrifices which they made, to be meaner than those who preceded us? Are we to do nothing for those who come after us? Are we to sacrifice that which those who went before have gained for us? If this idea of closing all the doors through which all new trade is to come to us be accepted by this House, at least we ought to adopt some means by which our population can be kept stationary; and we should bear in mind that when our ancestors pegged out claims for us in many parts of the world, these were not, at the time, more promising than the claims which we are now marking out.

What are we asked to do to-night? This is not a question of Uganda only; but we are asked to reverse the whole policy of this country—a policy undertaken, I believe, with the consent of the vast majority of the people of this country—and to relinquish the vast advantages which have accrued to us by the surrender of Heligoland, and by the treaties and engagements with foreign states, and to secure which our country has made sacrifices, in the belief that we were, in return, getting a *quid pro quo*. That *quid pro quo* we are now asked to sacrifice, and are asked to give up all share in what has been called the partition of Africa. My honourable friend almost always speaks in the first person

singular, therefore I do not suppose that he claims to speak for more than himself, and I think that he will find himself to-night in a minority. In the country I believe that he is in a still smaller minority. I believe that the people of this country have definitely made up their minds on this question, and have determined that they will take their full share in disposing of these new lands and in the work of civilisation they have to carry out there. They are justified in that determination—justified by the spirit of the past, justified by that spirit of adventure and enterprise which has rendered us, of all nations, peculiarly fitted to carry out the work of colonisation. It is a curious fact, and one which I have never been able to explain, that, of all the nations in the world, we are the only one which has been able to carry out this work of colonisation without great cost to ourselves. Take, for instance, the case of France, which has been ruling for so many years in Algeria. Up to this moment, although French rule there has been beneficent, Algeria costs to the French exchequer large sums annually. The same is the case with regard to Tunis, and with regard also to the foreign possessions of Germany, and the possessions of Italy in Abyssinia. It is likewise true of the foreign possessions of Portugal. Except in the case of Spain, in the discovery of America, and the early history of Holland, up to comparatively recent times, this is the case with the possessions of all foreign countries, which have not been able to carry out their colonisation permanently without expense to their subjects.

All these facts should lead us to be hopeful in undertaking this new work of colonisation, which does not differ from what has been done in other directions in the past. If we are not going to give up this mission—I adopt the expression which has been employed—let us look the matter in the face and be prepared, if need be, for some sacrifice of life and money, which, in the first instance, we may have to make. We have come to the point at which we should not consider life so sacred that it may not be sacrificed to save life. I hold that, both in matters of life and money, we may

sacrifice both, if we see before us a prospect of good, and a satisfaction for the sacrifice we may have to make.

This country has by large majorities declared its conviction that it is our duty to take our share in the work of civilisation in Africa. Our honour is pledged; and whatever you may think of the matter, it is too late to go back. The Government are in a state of suspense. They are always in a state of suspense. I respect the honourable member for Sunderland for having a definite policy. I, and those who agree with me, have also a policy, and I believe in the expansion of the Empire, and we are not ashamed to confess that we have that belief. We are not at all troubled by accusations of Jingoism. But the Government have, on the other hand, no policy whatever. My profound sympathy is given to the Government, who are endeavouring once again to do what no Government has ever done with success—namely, to ride two horses and to promote two different policies at the same time. Here is my honourable friend below me, the member for Leicester (Mr. Picton), the great opportunist of the present Parliament. He has an excuse for the Government. I do not know whether the Government approve of their defender—he says that he approves of their policy of inquiry. This policy of inquiry? Is there any man in this House who believes in it? The Government have plenty of information at their disposal; they know now all that they will know when Sir Gerald Portal reports; but it is difficult to go against old friends; it is better to appoint a commission than to come to a decision. I wonder they did not send out a judge of the High Court. But they have sent a 'commission of inquiry' to Uganda, and, of course, the commission cannot report until very late in the session; and then, as my honourable friend, the member for Leicester, says, the one supreme object of the Government will have been accomplished, and then, perhaps, he will support them in attending a little to what he calls subsidiary questions.

It is a most convenient doctrine which my honourable friend, who is a leader among the new Radicals, has now

taken up. He never mentioned his new convictions in the time of the late Government; I never heard him explain then that the Government might have in hand a supreme object which would lead them to disregard all subsidiary ones. The only things he cared about then were the subsidiary questions. I do not accuse him of inconsistency; it is delightful to note the growth of his mind.

I was saying that in Uganda we cannot go back if we would. What have we done there? By a charter we gave to a company certain powers. Not only was the company entrusted with discretion, but distinct and definite pressure was put upon it to go forward, and to prevent other countries from coming in and taking possession of territories which were within the sphere of British influence. Rightly or wrongly, the company yielded to that pressure of public opinion; they went forward in Uganda; they broke up such government as there was in Uganda. I am told the honourable member for Dumfries has said, in an excellent and powerful speech, that the normal condition there was one of massacre. Of course, there was a Government there —such a Government as you may expect in those countries; and if we have no business there whatever, and no responsibility, and never intend to take any, we had better have left those people to work out their own salvation for themselves, be it by massacre or in any other way. But, as a matter of fact, we did not do so. We broke up the authority of those who were held to be chiefs among the people. We came in at a cost which to my mind was trifling in comparison with the results achieved. We have secured for Uganda the *pax Britannica* which has been so beneficial in India.

I heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Gladstone) to-night speak about the sad and deplorable circumstances in Uganda. I think he spoke of those occurrences as constituting a massacre. There was no massacre at all. What existed in Uganda at that time were anarchy and civil war of the worst kind. If we had not been there, thousands, and perhaps hundreds of thousands, of people would have been cruelly massacred; and, after the victory of one party,

what remained of the other would have been cruelly tortured.

Captain Lugard was on the spot. Let me say, in passing, that I sometimes feel we do not do justice to our bravest and noblest citizens. Of Captain Lugard I know no more than any member of the House may know—I know him only through reading his works. He was, I believe, an Indian officer who was sent to Uganda under the orders of the company; he undertook a work of the highest responsibility and the greatest importance. Any one who reads his accounts impartially will agree in this—that he was, at all events, a man of extraordinary power and capacity, tact, discretion, and courage. Courage is a common virtue, but he has shown it in no common way, and he has exhibited a modesty which is beyond all praise. It is something for England to glory in that we can still boast such servants as these. I was saying that he was present in Uganda when this state of things arose. He took his measures. In the confusion which followed, four hundred lives at the outside were sacrificed. Captain Lugard himself puts the number at considerably less. It was deplorable, no doubt; but that sacrifice cheaply purchased the peace and temporary civilisation which followed. Long before now the people would have been at each other's throats but for the presence of the English. You gave a charter to the company, and, through it, have undertaken this responsibility; you have never disavowed that; and now you cannot leave that country whatever it may cost you. Even if, as the honourable member for Northampton said, it cost you another expedition, you are bound at all hazards to fulfil the obligations of this country, to maintain the faith of this country to the people to whom it is pledged.

What would happen if you left? Would not the Protestants, Catholics, and Mahomedans be at one another's throats, and would there not be a massacre almost unparalleled in the history of Africa? And who would suffer most? Those who have been our allies; they are the people whom we have disarmed, and who would now fall

an easy prey to their enemies. I do not think my honourable friend contemplated such an abandonment as that. He was quite ready to protest against any further extension of the Empire. But the extension has been accomplished, and we are dealing now with what has taken place and cannot be recalled. And I say it would be as great a disgrace as ever befell England if you were to retire from a country whose prosperity and the lives of whose people depend absolutely upon your continuance of the hold you have upon them.

The honourable member for Northampton has made one of those speeches to which we are accustomed. It was a very amusing speech on a very serious subject, but I do not think that questions of international policy ought to be determined by satire. The consequences of the decision at which this committee is about to arrive will extend to long years after you have made it. The decision at which you are about to arrive involves the faith of Great Britain, and the influence of Great Britain, not only in Uganda, but in the whole of Africa, for news travels fast even in that vast continent.

The honourable member has talked about the cost of an expedition to Uganda, but I do not understand this measuring duty and honour by the money it costs. The honourable member for Northampton, however, is only following the example of the right honourable gentleman the Chief Secretary for Ireland (Mr. Morley) in that respect. If we have to protect people who are in danger of their lives, we ought not to count the cost. According to the argument of the honourable member, if it will cost £10 we may protect their lives, but if it will cost a million we had better keep the money in our pockets. I believe that the honourable member for Northampton has ludicrously exaggerated the cost of this matter. He has told the committee that it will be necessary to bring up the British troops in large numbers if we are to have an expedition like that to the Soudan. But Uganda is only six hundred miles from the coast, while the Soudan is two thousand miles from the coast.

MR. LABOUCHERE: I was referring to the expedition to Suakin.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: The honourable member speaks as if Suakin were really a serious part of our work in connection with the Soudan. Our position in Suakin was abandoned. The railway was abandoned. I confess now that I wish it had not been abandoned. The heavy part of that expedition was the cost incurred in the attempted rescue of Gordon. The two expeditions are absolutely incomparable. All the evidence—and I believe it to be good evidence—goes to show that the peace of Uganda and of the neighbouring countries can be secured at a comparatively small expenditure. A few English officers with a small body of Soudanese troops will be able to keep the country quiet. The honourable member for Northampton talks of the cost of erecting forts, but all the forts that will be necessary are mere stockades, which can be erected at the cost of a few shillings, and which will be amply sufficient to withstand the assaults of savages. I do not see the slightest reason for believing that the cost of preserving the peace and of policing the country need be anything more than the taxation of the country itself will bear. We have had this same question argued over and over again with regard to other parts of Africa, and in every case the discretion and the prudence of a few English officers have enabled the peace of the district to be preserved without a single farthing of expense to the English Exchequer.

The honourable member spoke of possible danger that would arise from the attacks of the Mahdi and Senoussi. As for the Mahdi, those who know best do not fear him in any way. Mahdism is a periodic outburst of fanaticism which is nearly exhausted, and I believe that in a very short time the Soudan will fall like a ripe pear into the lap of Egypt. The Senoussi is a person of a very different character, and it is very difficult to prophesy what will be the future of the party he leads. Tradition and all information as to this sect are, however, entirely in a different direction, and he is not at all likely to interfere with the position

we may acquire in Uganda. Putting aside these two improbable hypotheses, there is no reason to believe that the cost of our protectorate or rule in Uganda is likely to be anything but moderate in the first instance, and nothing at all in the course of a very few years.

As to the commerce of Uganda, the late Mr. Mackay, the African missionary, who was so universally respected, said that the climate of Uganda is excellent, that the country can produce almost anything, and that the only difficulty is the want of transport and of British enterprise ; but that when once those two things were secured, there was no reason whatever why Uganda should not be a most prosperous, even a wealthy, country. How can we expect the commerce of Uganda to thrive when the cost of traffic between that country and the coast amounts to about £200 per ton ? But what would the honourable member have said about the cost of carriage to the North-West of Canada a hundred years ago ? Until the Canadian Pacific Railway was constructed there was scarcely any trade in those great dominions of the British Crown. I maintain that the prospects of Uganda are quite equal to those of the North-West of Canada fifty years ago. This is what Lord Rosebery means by pegging out claims for posterity. Lord Rosebery knows that the returns from Uganda cannot be immediate, but he knows that the returns some time or another are certain.

This brings me to another point. I have quoted the opinions of Mr. Mackay to the effect that you cannot have a commerce in Uganda without a means of transport. I call the policy of the Government one of drifting. They might just as well take a bold stand now, because the result will be the same. They have committed themselves just as much by sending this mission as they could have done by saying, ' We are going to retain the country, and make the best of it.' The question is, Are we going to make the best of it, and how much time are we going to waste before we make the best of it ? I believe that nothing can be done in this territory unless you are prepared to make the

railway at a cost of some two and a half millions, or of three millions, according to that great financial authority, the member for Northampton. That would be the cost if you made the whole six hundred miles, but those who are best acquainted with the country think that it would be sufficient at first to carry the railway up to the mountains, a distance of three hundred miles. If you made the line up to the mountains you would get over all the country which is difficult for animal porterage, and by animal porterage you would be able to carry on the traffic for the rest of the way. The cost of a railway for three hundred miles would be a million and a half. But whether the railway is to cost a million and a half or three millions, you had better make up your minds to-night that if you are going to stay in this territory you will have to spend the money—that you will have to guarantee some interest on the money in order that the line may be made. I firmly believe that the railway will be a good investment, and if you spend this money the working classes of this country, and the people in the slums, for whom the honourable member for Sunderland is so anxious, will benefit, for the whole of the work will, of course, be done in this country, and the line will be engineered by natives of this country. Even in the honourable member's view, therefore, the money will not be wholly thrown away. I believe that the chances of this railway are just as good as were the chances of the railways which were built in India thirty years ago and which are now producing a large revenue. This railway will bring you into communication with twelve millions of people in the countries conterminous with the Victoria Lake and the other great lakes; and, whatever may be said of Uganda, nobody will deny that the neighbouring countries, like Unyoro and Usoga, are countries of enormous natural wealth. As soon as you make porterage possible we shall have a large commerce.

We shall get from this country gum and rubber, and perhaps even wheat, and in return we shall send out large quantities of our manufactures. It is a most remarkable

fact that as soon as we created this company, and this sphere of influence, the British and indeed the general trade of Zanzibar increased at a perfectly marvellous rate. In the last year for which we have returns it nearly doubled, increasing from 72,000 to 131,000 tons. If that is done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? I think, therefore, that the investment is one which a rich country can wisely undertake.

With regard to the slave-trade, the railway will certainly do more than anything else could do to put a stop to the abominable traffic in slaves. What is the slave-trade and its cause? People do not make slaves from mere love of cruelty and mischief. They carry on the slave-trade because they get their livelihood by it, and the slave-trade in Africa is largely a matter of porterage. Tribes are enslaved in order to carry burdens down to the coast, and then are sold for what they will fetch. If you can give to the slave-raiding Arabs peaceful means of making an honest livelihood, do you think that they are so fond of war that they will not accept these means? Whenever it has been made profitable to a nation or tribe to keep the peace, they have always done so. Take an illustration. In the old days we had to fight with the people of the Punjab, and when we had conquered them they supplied us with our best native soldiers. But now that peace reigns, and the country is prosperous, these people, who were once the most warlike race in India, are confirmed agriculturists and peasants, and we cannot get from them an adequate number of recruits for our army. What happened in India will happen in Africa.

Make it the interest of the Arab slave-traders to give up the slave-trade and you will see the end of that traffic. Construct your railway, and thereby increase the means of traffic, and you will take away three-fourths if not the whole of the temptation to carry on the slave-trade.

I ask the Committee, Are they in earnest in this matter of the slave-trade? Is the hereditary sentiment of the British people still alive? Do we hold it to be one of our

prime duties, as Lord Rosebery said, and great glories, to take a prominent part in suppressing this trade? If we do, let us look boldly in the face the necessities of the situation, and let us spend our money wisely. We spend £200,000 a year for a squadron on the East Coast which, I am afraid, has too often increased indirectly the horrors and sufferings entailed by the slave-traffic, and now we are asked to sanction an expenditure which I believe will be much more fruitful of good results.

I wish, in conclusion, to say that I do hope that the Government will take to heart this debate. They get no credit from either side by taking a middle course. I am uncertain, whether, if the majority of them follow out their wishes, they would not at once pronounce in favour of the absolute evacuation of Uganda, and whether they would not be prepared to take all the risks of such a course. At all events that would be a bold course, and they might make their own defence, and might go to the country and see if they could get approval for it. But, on the other hand, they may take the course I urge most earnestly upon them. I do not care whether they say that course was forced upon them by the proceedings of the party opposite, or in obedience to their own wishes; but at least they could say in the present situation, and with the responsibilities which we have undertaken, and which are incumbent upon them as much as they were upon their predecessors, that they will face this problem and that they will carry out the policy which of course will result in the protectorate or the annexation which is feared by the honourable member below me, but which I believe will do credit to the British name and will in the long run be in accordance both with our interest and our honour.

## WORKING MEN THEIR OWN LANDLORDS

BIRMINGHAM, OCTOBER 11, 1894

THERE is a question which is hardly less important than the temperance question, and which is closely connected with it. I mean the improvement of the homes of the people. Those who go amongst the poor know perfectly well that a miserable home is the cause, quite as often as it is the consequence, of drunkenness and intemperate drinking, and that a happy home will do much to remove the temptation which leads men to spend too much of their time in the public-house. Well, I have two proposals to make to you regarding the dwellings of the people. In the first place, we want to clear away those nests of disease and crime which exist in all our large cities, and where people are herded together under conditions which make comfort and health, and even proper living, entirely impossible ; and for that purpose all I think to be necessary is to extend the principle of the Artisans' Dwellings Act, which, bear in mind, was passed by a Conservative Government, and which was, and remains to this day, the one serious valuable attempt to deal with one of the greatest of our social questions. And, in order that I may anticipate my opponents, let it not be said that I am praising this Act now for the first time. I remember perfectly well, when it was passed by Mr. Cross, speaking here in Birmingham, and speaking in Sheffield (where I was standing as a candidate for Parliament), and saying that Mr. Cross by this Act had done more to promote the social welfare of the people than Liberal statesmen had done for many years before. But, as you know, however good was the principle of the Act, it has not been largely availed of, and the reason is the excessive cost of carrying it into effect. That is due to the fact that it is confined to so limited an area that, when it is adopted, the cost falls upon the community, but the profit goes to the neighbouring landlords and

occupiers. I am not speaking of our own scheme in Birmingham, because I was successful in obtaining exceptional terms which were not enjoyed by any other corporation in the Kingdom ; and as to that scheme, I will say in a parenthesis, that although we paid a great deal more than we ought to have done for our property, yet that, in the long run, and in the next generation, that scheme will not only have justified its existence as having promoted the health and general prosperity of the city, but it will make this corporation one of the richest corporations in the United Kingdom. But I continue my argument, and I say that, speaking generally, the fault of the Act was that it does not allow the corporations to take the surrounding property, but only allows them to take the property which is insanitary, and the result is as I have described to you. In order to change that, proposals have been made by the London County Council, and by various town councils, for adopting the system of betterment, by which a charge should be made on the surrounding owners for the improvement which is carried out. In principle that is absolutely fair, and I have supported it in Parliament and outside ; but, as a practical man, the more I consider the subject, the more I am impressed with the difficulties of the case, and the less I believe that that will be a real security for the economy of these transactions ; and therefore, what I propose in place of it is that the local authorities should have, in all cases, power to take whatever land they require for the purpose of improvement at a fair price ; that they should be able to combine a great city improvement—the widening of streets, the making of squares, and so on—with sanitary reconstruction, and in this way the value of the improved property will go to the corporation, and will go far to compensate for the cost of the sanitary work. If this change is carried out, and it cannot be held to be unjust or injurious to any living being, then you will find the corporations of the country—our own, I hope, first among the number—clearing the evil quarters in their cities, and making room for better houses, for better conditions of life, and prevent-

ing by the regulations they will establish the re-creation of the rookeries which in the past have caused so much misery and harm.

And that is by no means all. I have hitherto spoken only of great schemes for dealing with large areas in our great cities; but I want to deal now with the individual home. What is the best security and guarantee that the home of the working man shall be comfortable, shall be healthy? It is that a man shall be the owner of his dwelling. A primary object of the programme which I am putting before you to-night—one to which I attach as much importance as to any other item—is a House Purchase Act, by which the working classes of this country, and especially the artisans of the towns, may be enabled to become the owners of their own dwellings upon favourable terms. Parliament has allotted the sum of £40,000,000, or nearly £40,000,000 sterling, to enable the Irish tenant to become the owner of his own holding. I do not grudge the British credit which is being used for this beneficent purpose. I believe that this system not only acts to the advantage of the tenant in Ireland, but also tends towards the security and peace of the country, and therefore to the advantage of the whole population. But that is not all. Parliament has also permitted the advance of unlimited sums, in order that the agricultural labourer may acquire allotments and small holdings. Again, I entirely approve. I believe that to do this, to give the labourer an interest in the soil which he cultivates, is to make him a better citizen, is to attach him to the land of his birth, is to stay the emigration from the country into the towns, and in that way indirectly, if not directly, is an advantage to the towns as much as it is to the country. But if that be so, I ask why should we not go further, why should we not extend this beneficent principle, why should not we give the artisan in the towns an equal chance with the Irish tenant? He is profoundly loyal, his honesty is unquestioned, he is as deserving as any other class in the community, and to give him this opportunity, to give him a visible stake in the country, will be to give stability to all

our institutions, and will be to raise his conception of his responsibilities and of his civic duty. Now, that is my proposal to you—that the State shall do for you what it has done for the labourers in the country, and what it has done for the Irish tenants. There is a gentleman—Mr. Stanley Boulter—who was the Unionist candidate for one of the divisions in Yorkshire, who has recently written some very able letters to the press on this subject. He is coming to Birmingham next week, I believe, to advocate this reform, and I hope that you will go to his meeting in large numbers and give him a hearty welcome. I do not know whether he was first in the field with the proposal. I am inclined to think that we may claim to be joint authors; but, in any case, I am indebted to him for many details and much information. Now I want to put before you in figures the result of such a reform as that which I am suggesting. I think they will be calculated rather to surprise you. I will take an ordinary workman's house in Birmingham which is let at a rental of 5s. 6d. a week. That would be a fairly comfortable house—a house such as a prosperous working man in fair employment would be likely to occupy. I inquired of one of the leading surveyors in Birmingham, who has a great deal to do with property, what would be the cost of such a house, and he tells me that the average market price would be about £140. If the working man occupying that house were to find one-fifth of the purchase money (£28) from his own savings, and if the State were to advance him, through the municipality, the remaining four-fifths (£112), and if then he were to continue to pay the same rent as at present he would have paid off the loan with interest, and he would be the absolute owner of his own house in about ten years. That is supposing that the State lends the money at 3 per cent. But now suppose, for some reason or another, he felt himself unable to pay so large a rent as at present; then if he were to pay 3s. a week—that is to say, 2s. 6d. a week less than his present rent—he would still pay off the loan and become absolute owner in about twenty years; and if he were willing to wait still longer—say, for thirty years—he

would become the absolute owner of his house by the payment of 2s. 3d. a week, or less than one-half of his present rent. I want you to have the whole of the facts before you. (A Voice—'What about the land—leasehold or freehold?') My own impression is that in the majority of cases the £140 would purchase the freehold. Now I was going to say that, in order that you might have the whole case before you, you must bear in mind that under these circumstances the tenant would have to pay the rates which are now charged to the landlord; but my inquiries show that in such a house as that which I have described the rates would not amount to more than 1s. per week, and consequently 6s. 6d. per week for ten years, 4s. for twenty years, and 3s. 3d. for thirty years, would give him the ownership of his house. Now, can you not see what an enormous boon this would be to thousands and tens of thousands of working men, who might become the owners of their own dwellings without adding in any way to their present charges? Is it unreasonable that the State, which represents the community, should give this assistance, which is requisite to the success of our plan? Why, I have shown you that there are already ample precedents; but I will go further, I will point out to you that all I am asking is that the State shall use money which now belongs to the working classes and invest it for their benefit. At the present time the State holds eighty millions of money in the savings banks of this country, the result of the thrift of the working classes. The State pays them 2½ per cent. interest upon that money; all I ask is that it should lend it back again to them at 3 per cent. Experience shows us that it is absolutely impossible for the State to make a safer investment; no money has been lost in lending to the Irish tenants. No money has been lost in lending to the agricultural labourers; and the experience of great institutions like the Peabody Trust and the Artisans' Dwellings in London goes to show that the rents are paid with unexampled regularity. The cost of management of a scheme of this kind properly conducted could not exceed 6s. per cent. That is the precise cost of the management of a

similar scheme which has been carried on for many years by the Leeds Building Society, which is a very large, a very old established, and a most admirable institution, which has been conducted to the great advantage of the people of Leeds and the surrounding neighbourhood; and, therefore, if the State were to carry out this suggestion, it would be able to take a profit of 4s. per cent. on the transaction—that is, of nearly ¼ per cent.—and at the same time to confer an enormous benefit upon countless thousands of the most industrious, the most deserving class in our population.

## SPLENDID ISOLATION

### Whitehall Rooms, London, January 21, 1896

[On the formation of Lord Salisbury's Cabinet in the summer of 1895, Mr. Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the Colonies, and thereby surprised the public mind. The strongest men in British Cabinets had not commonly been Colonial Secretaries, nor did the office seem one likely, on the face of it, for a Radical social reformer. Those, however, who had watched Mr. Chamberlain's career—reflected, moreover, in speeches like the two foregoing—were aware of a gradual development in his views of the position of this country, which had been going on since his tenure of office at the Board of Trade, when he had the opportunity to judge of the effect on British commerce of ineffective and ill-considered foreign and colonial tactics. Already, it appears from his Devonshire Club speech, ideas of constructive policy were in his mind. He threw himself with ardour into the duties and problems of his new office, and was understood to be 'getting up' the position and case of each several dominion and colony in turn when, in the last days of 1895, his attention—and the world's—was violently demanded by South Africa.

The incursion of Dr. Jameson into the Transvaal was made on December 29, 1895. On January 3, 1896, the Emperor of Germany sent a message to President Kruger in terms deemed unfriendly to Great Britain, and greatly resented in this country. There was a moment of dumb suspense. The 'Flying Squadron' of powerful ships was commissioned and made ready for sea in a few days, and assurances of sympathy and support were received from the principal colonies of the Empire.

These were the circumstances in which the following speech was delivered on January 21, 1896, when Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, took the chair at a dinner to Lord Lamington, who was leaving England to take up his duties as Governor of the Colony of Queensland. His speech was made in proposing Lord Lamington's health.]

I THINK that I see before me a representative gathering of British subjects, whose principal interests lie in that great group of Australian colonies, whose present greatness and importance give us but a faint indication of the splendid future which awaits them. For of one thing I am certain, whatever may be the fate of the old country—and even as to that I have sufficient confidence—no man can doubt that our vigorous offspring in the Southern Seas are bound at no distant time to rival the older civilisation of the Continent of Europe in wealth, in population, and in all the attributes of a great nation. But, although, as I have said, your interests lie in this direction, I have an instinctive feeling that to-night you are thinking not so much of Australian politics and of Australian progress as you are of events that have recently occurred in another quarter of the globe and of their connection with Imperial interests. If that be so, I hail the fact as another proof of the solidarity of Imperial sentiment in making it impossible that a blow can be struck, or a chord sounded, in even the most distant portion of the Queen's dominions, without an echo coming back from every other part of the British Empire.

It would be inopportune in me, it would be improper, if I were to dwell on the incidents which have diverted attention to South Africa. Those incidents will be the subject of judicial inquiry in this country and in Africa, and I assume that, with the fair-mindedness which distinguishes them, my countrymen will wait to hear both the indictment and the defence before they pronounce a judgment. But, in the meantime, I will venture to say that I think there is a tendency to attach too much importance to sensational occurrences which pass away and leave no trace behind, and not enough to the general course of British policy and the general current of colonial progress. I have heard it said that we never have had a colonial policy, that we have simply blundered into all the best places in the earth. I admit that we have made mistakes. I have no doubt that we are answerable for sins of commission as well as for sins of omission; but, after all is said, this remains—

that we alone among the nations of the earth have been able to establish and to maintain colonies under different conditions in all parts of the world, that we have maintained them to their own advantage and to ours, and that we have secured, not only the loyal attachment of all British subjects, but the general good-will of the races, whether they be native or whether they be European, that have thus come under the British flag. This may be a comforting assurance when we think of occasional mistakes, and when we are rebuked even for our misfortunes we may find some consolation in our success.

There is, gentlemen, another consideration which I think is not inappropriate to such a gathering as this. A few weeks ago England appeared to stand alone in the world, surrounded by jealous competitors and by altogether unexpected hostility. Differences between ourselves and other nations which were of long standing appeared suddenly to come to a head and to assume threatening proportions; and from quarters to which we might have looked for friendship and consideration—having regard to our traditions and to a certain community of interest—we were confronted with suspicion, and even with hate. We had to recognise that our success itself, however legitimate, was imputed to us as a crime; that our love of peace was taken as a sign of weakness; and that our indifference to foreign criticism was construed into an invitation to insult us. The prospect of our discomfiture was regarded with hardly disguised satisfaction by our competitors, who, at the same time, must have been forced to own that we alone held our possessions throughout the world in trust for all and that we admit them to our markets as freely as we do our own subjects. I regret that such a feeling should exist, and that we should be forced to acknowledge its existence; but, as it does exist, I rejoice that it found expression. No better service was ever done to this nation, for it has enabled us to show, in face of all, that while we are resolute to fulfil our obligations we are equally determined to maintain our rights.

Three weeks ago, in the words of Mr. Foster, the Leader

of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 'the great mother-empire stood splendidly isolated.' And how does she stand to-day? She stands secure in the strength of her own resources, in the firm resolution of her people without respect to party, and in the abundant loyalty of her children from one end of the Empire to another.

The resolution which was conveyed to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Australian colonies, and the display of patriotic enthusiasm on the part of the Dominion of Canada, came to us as a natural response to the outburst of national spirit in the United Kingdom, and as a proof that British hearts beat in unison throughout the world, whatever may be the distances that separate us.

Then let us cultivate those sentiments. Let us do all in our power by improving our communications, by developing our commercial relations, by co-operating in mutual defence, and none of us then will ever feel isolated; no part of the Empire will stand alone, so long as it can count upon the common interest of all in its welfare and in its security. That is the lesson I desire to impress on my countrymen. In the words of Tennyson, let

> 'Britain's myriad voices call,
> "Sons, be welded each and all,
> Into one Imperial whole,
> One with Britain, heart and soul!
> One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!"'

And in the time to come, the time that must come, when these colonies of ours have grown in stature, in population, and in strength, this league of kindred nations, this federation of Greater Britain, will not only provide for its own security, but will be a potent factor in maintaining the peace of the world.

Our guest to-night goes out to take his part in this work of drawing tighter the bonds which unite us to our children in the Antipodes. He goes to an infant colony, an infant which is destined to become a giant, and the future possibilities of which no man can measure. Queensland has an

area, which—shall I say ?—is three times greater than the German Empire. It has a soil which can produce anything. It has vast mineral resources. In a generation its population has increased fifteenfold. It has already a revenue of three or four millions sterling. It has completed 2500 miles of railway. It has exports valued at ten millions sterling, all of them, except a small fraction, coming to the United Kingdom or to some of the British possessions. Yet this colony of Queensland, great as it is, is only one of seven, all equally important, equally energetic, equally prosperous, equally loyal. I say that the relations between these colonies and ourselves are questions of momentous import to us both, and I hope that our rulers and our people will leave no stone unturned to show the store that we all set on the continued amity, the continued affection, of our kindred beyond the sea. That is the message we ask Lord Lamington to take with him, and we wish him health and prosperity in the colony over which he is about to preside.

In responding to the toast of 'The Chairman,' which was proposed by Sir James Garrick, Mr. Chamberlain said:

Nothing could be more gratifying to me than that this toast should have been proposed by the eloquent representative of the colony which we have met to honour as well as its future Governor, and nothing could be more agreeable than the kindly response which you have given to the toast. It almost emboldens me to think that there may yet be occasions upon which I shall venture to address my fellow-countrymen—a point on which, I admit, I have had grave doubts since I have become acquainted with certain criticisms of my recent performances. When I became Secretary of State for the Colonies I accepted with that office certain duties, not the least pleasant being that of presiding over gatherings similar to this. I attended a meeting of the friends of South Africa on an occasion interesting especially to our colony of Natal, and I made a speech upon that occasion in which, in my simple and ingenuous way, I ventured to point out that this was on the whole a con-

siderable Empire, and that any true view of its perspective would take into account the greatness of the colonies, and the magnitude of their resources, as well as the past history of the mother country. And thereupon I was surprised to read, in the report of a speech of a minor luminary of the late Government, on the occasion of the recent raid into the Transvaal, that that unfortunate occurrence was entirely due to the 'spread-eagle' speech which I had made. It is extraordinary what great events spring from trifling causes. I had no conception that my words would travel so far or have so great an influence. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I have never made a 'spread-eagle' speech in my life. I think I have been able to distinguish between patriotism and jingoism. But in order that there may be no mistake, I desire to say now, in the most formal way, that the few remarks which I have addressed to you to-night are not to be taken as an intimation to any individual to carry on war on his own account or to make an invasion upon a friendly nation with which we are at present at peace. But this is not all, because this afternoon I read in an evening newspaper that this same speech, which I thought so natural and so innocent, was really the dictating cause of our difficulties in British Guiana, and of the complications with our cousins across the Atlantic. It appears that in speaking of Imperial unity, in endeavouring to popularise that idea among my countrymen, I am giving offence to other nations.

Gentlemen, I cannot help thinking that Lord Rosebery was mistaken, when, a short time ago, he said that the 'Little Englanders' no longer existed among us. A pretty pass we must have come to if the minister who is responsible for the British colonies is forbidden to speak of their future, of their greatness, of the importance of maintaining friendly relations with them, of the necessity of promoting the unity of the British race, for fear of giving offence. I remember a story of a certain burgomaster in a continental town to whom complaints were made that naughty boys were accustomed to throw mud upon the passers-by. He was asked to intervene, and he issued a proclamation which was

to the effect that all respectable inhabitants were requested to wear their second-hand clothes in order not to give offence. I do not so understand the position which I hold. I decline to speak with bated breath of our colonies for fear of giving offence to foreign nations. We mean them no harm; we hope they mean us none. But not for any such consideration will we be withheld from speaking of points which have for us the greatest interest and upon which the future of our Empire depends. Sir James Garrick has kindly attributed to me very creditable motives in seeking the office which has been conferred upon me. He is perhaps not far wrong in thinking that I have long believed that the future of the colonies and the future of this country were interdependent, and that this was a creative time, that this was the opportunity which, once let slip, might never recur, for bringing together all the people who are under the British flag, and for consolidating them into a great self-sustaining and self-protecting Empire whose future will be worthy of the traditions of the race.

## COMMERCIAL UNION OF THE EMPIRE

### Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, London, June 9, 1896

[On June 9, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain, as honorary president, took the chair at the opening meeting of the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, which was held in the Hall of the Grocers' Company, Princes Street, E.C. There were present many delegates from all parts of the Empire. The following was Mr. Chamberlain's speech. That second proposal to which he refers was that the colonies should give the mother country 5 per cent. 'off' their high duties, Great Britain in return to place a 5 per cent. duty on all foreign produce.]

My Lords and Gentlemen,—In opening the proceedings at this, the third Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, it is a great pleasure to me, both as your honorary president and as a member of the Government, to bid you all—and especially those who come from a distance—a hearty welcome.

As Secretary of State for the Colonies I rejoice in every fresh indication of the essential unity of the Empire and of that community of interest upon which we found all our hopes of maintaining and strengthening the relations between the mother country and her colonies and dependencies. I think we may say that the omens were never more favourable, and I am encouraged to hope from your deliberations that you will make an important advance towards the goal to which all our patriotic aspirations and our mutual interests are steadily tending. The very existence of such a congress as this—the fact that to-day the representatives of the commerce of the Dominion of Canada and of the West Indies, of Australasia, of South Africa, and of our great Indian dependencies, should meet in London the delegates of the commerce of the United Kingdom—is evidence that we have to a great extent annihilated space, and that the distance which separates us is no longer any barrier to those free communications and that personal intercourse which are the conditions of national unity. Insensibly the bonds between us are strengthening and multiplying. You have for a long time—you gentlemen who come from the colonies—been in our thoughts ; you are now actually in our sight. Your claims, your wishes, the resources of your separate countries, your political conditions—all these are becoming as familiar to us as if we were all provinces in one great kingdom or States in a true Imperial federation. I think that further knowledge must tend to complete the agreement between us, and that it will bring within the range of practical politics that splendid dream which has been cherished by all the greatest and most patriotic statesmen, both at home and in the colonies, when we may reach a union in which free States, all of them enjoying their independent institutions, will yet be inseparably united in defence of common interests, and in the observance of mutual obligations.

My lords and gentlemen, I have studied the long and multifarious list of proposals which will be laid before you, and I can assure you that your decisions will be carefully

noted by Her Majesty's Government. One thing I observe with great satisfaction, and that is that the same note rings throughout the whole of them. There is one guiding principle, and I think it is a significant fact, that, almost without exception, all these resolutions, whether they are propounded by the colonial or by the home chambers, tend in the direction of greater uniformity and of closer union between the colonies and ourselves. I find that you are called upon to consider the necessity for improved communications within the limits of the Empire; that you are asked also to consider the possibility of greater and cheaper facilities of inter-Imperial postage; that you are asked to see whether some approach may not be made to greater uniformity in commercial law—in the laws regulating inter-Imperial commerce; and I note one resolution—which I think comes from my own city of Birmingham—in favour of an Imperial council for consultation and advice.

All these proposals are of great and of pressing importance, but they are, I was going to say, dwarfed into insignificance in comparison with other proposals which will also be put before you and which are intended to secure the commercial union of the Empire. It is, I cannot help thinking, to your deliberations and your discussions on this question that the public will look with the greatest interest and the greatest expectation, because it must be evident to you that, if this question could once be satisfactorily settled, all the other things to which I have referred would follow as a matter of course in its train. If we had a commercial union throughout the Empire, of course there would have to be a council of the Empire, and that council would be called upon to watch over the execution of the arrangements which might be made, and to consider and make amendments in them from time to time; and, whenever such a council is established, surely there will naturally be remitted to it all those questions of communication and of commercial law in which the whole of the Empire is mutually interested. Even Imperial defence could not be excluded from its deliberations, for Imperial defence is only another name for

the protection of Imperial commerce, and to such a council as I have imagined to be possible the details of such defence, the method of carrying it out, the provision to be made for it, would naturally be remitted. Gradually, therefore, by that prudent and experimental process by which all our greatest institutions have slowly been built up we should, I believe, approach to a result which would be little, if at all, distinguished from a real federation of the Empire. In my personal opinion this is a question which dominates all other Imperial interests, to which everything else is secondary, and which is at the root of the problem with which we have now to deal. The establishment of commercial union throughout the Empire would not only be the first step, the decisive step towards the realisation of the most inspiring idea that has ever entered into the minds of British statesmen.

I shall not venture to anticipate the discussion in which you will shortly engage, but perhaps you will permit me very briefly to lay before you the conditions of the problem with which you must deal. There is one advantage which we must recognise at the outset—that is, that I believe we are absolutely unanimous as to the object which we desire to attain. No one nowadays, in this country or outside of it, denies the enormous benefit it would be to the British race throughout the Empire if we could arrange some union which would lead to closer relations, and which would retain within the Empire the trade and the subjects now diverted to foreign lands ; but up to the present time we have not been agreed as to the methods by which this object may be reached.

It appears to me that there are only three lines of progress which have been suggested, or which can be suggested, to accomplish this great object. The first of them is a proposal that the colonies should abandon their own fiscal system, and should adopt ours, that they should carry out fully the doctrines of free trade, that they should open their markets not only to us, but to all the world, and that they should abandon entirely the protective duties upon

which now they rest very largely for the revenues they collect. That is a proposal which is supported by the Cobden Club, by extreme, or, perhaps, I ought to say, by orthodox free traders ; and there is no doubt a great deal to be said for it. I do not deny that possibly it might be for all concerned the best solution. At the same time I am bound to point out that that would not bring about commercial union in the sense in which we have generally understood the word, because that would be in the direction of cosmopolitan union, but would offer no particular advantage to the trade of the Empire as such. But what is to my mind a much more fatal objection is the fact that, speaking generally, the colonies will not adopt this proposal. We must consider it, therefore, as a counsel of perfection, and if we are to wait until the colonies generally are converted to our views in regard to the advantages of free trade, let us recognise the fact that in that case we must postpone the hope of commercial union to the Greek kalends. Free trade in this country has been developed, no doubt, to the great advantage of this country, for a period of half a century, but in spite of that it has made no converts. We do not find—again I am speaking generally, because I know there are exceptions—but we do not find that there is any considerable approach to our system on the part of the colonies, and there is no approach at all to it on the part of foreign countries.

I pass on, then, to the second proposal, which has been laid before a similar congress to this, and which found expression at the great conference at Ottawa a year or two ago—that is, a proposal which has been favoured by some of our principal colonies, and which has been advocated with great force and eloquence by leading colonists. It is the very reverse, in spirit at any rate, of the proposal I have just been considering, for whereas the first proposal requires that the colonies should abandon their system in favour of ours, this proposal requires that we should abandon our system in favour of theirs, and it is in effect that, while the colonies should be absolutely free to impose what pro-

tective duties they please both on foreign countries and upon British commerce, they should be required to make a small discrimination in favour of British trade, in return for which we are expected to change our whole system, and impose duties on food and raw material. Well, I express again my own opinion when I say that there is not the slightest chance that in any reasonable time this country, or the Parliament of this country, would adopt so one-sided an agreement. The foreign trade of this country is so large, and the foreign trade of the colonies is comparatively so small, that a small preference given to us upon that foreign trade by the colonies would make so trifling a difference—would be so small a benefit to the total volume of our trade—that I do not believe the working classes of this country would consent to make a revolutionary change for what they would think to be an infinitesimal gain.

You will, then, see that so far we have only arrived at a deadlock. We have a proposal by British free traders which is rejected by the British colonies; we have a proposal by colonial protectionists which is rejected by Great Britain. We have, therefore, if we are to make any progress at all, to seek a third course—a course in which there shall be give and take on both sides, in which neither side will pedantically adhere to preconceived conclusions, and in which the separate interests of the parts shall be subordinated to the good of the whole.

I admit that, if I understand it correctly, I find the germs of such a proposal in a resolution which is to be submitted to you on behalf of the Toronto Board of Trade. What is that resolution? Again I say I hope that I am correctly explaining it. That resolution I understand to be one for the creation of a British Zollverein or Customs Union, and would establish at once practically free trade throughout the British Empire, but would leave the separate contracting parties free to make their own arrangements with regard to duties on foreign goods, except that this is an essential condition of the proposal—that Great Britain shall consent to place moderate duties upon certain articles

which are of large production in the colonies. Now if I have rightly understood it these articles would comprise corn, meat, wool, and sugar, and perhaps other articles of enormous consumption in this country, which are at present largely produced in the colonies, and which might, under such an arrangement, be wholly produced in the colonies and wholly produced by British labour. On the other hand, as I have said, the colonies, while maintaining their duties upon foreign importations, would agree to a free interchange of commodities with the rest of the Empire, and would cease to place protective duties on any products of British labour. That is the principle of the German Zollverein, that is the principle which underlies the federation in the United States of America; and I do not doubt for a moment that if it were adopted it would be the strongest bond of union between the British race throughout the world. I say that such a proposal as that might commend itself even to an orthodox free trader. It would be the greatest advance that free trade has ever made since it was first advocated by Mr. Cobden, since it would extend its doctrines permanently to more than 300,000,000 of the human race, and to communities many of which are the most prosperous, the most thriving, and the most rapidly increasing in the world; and, on the other hand, it would open up to the colonies an almost unlimited market for their agricultural and other productions.

Of course, the details of such a scheme would require the most careful examination. There may have to be exceptions made to the principle, although I believe the principle itself must be adopted if any progress is to be made at all; but I am not going to discuss these exceptions on the present occasion. I only want to impress on you my personal conviction that if a proposal of this kind came to us from the colonies, backed by any considerable support on their part, it would not be met with a blank refusal by the people of this country. I say, gentlemen, if it were proposed to us by the colonies, because I do not consider it would be either wise or practical that a proposal of this kind should come in

the first instance from the United Kingdom. We know how strenuously the colonies cling to their own independence, and their own initiative. If they desire, as we believe they do, this closer union, if they are willing to make some sacrifice of their present arrangements and convictions in order to secure it, let them say so. Let the offer come voluntarily from them, and I believe it will be considered in this country not in any huckstering spirit, but will be entertained as part of a greater policy that is intended to unite in the closest bonds of affection and of interest all the communities which are under the British flag, and all the subjects of Her Majesty throughout the Empire. I hope you will not consider that I have gone beyond my duty in making these observations to you. Believe me that I am actuated solely by the strong desire I entertain that your deliberations, which in any case will be most useful, should have some practical result in bringing us nearer to the object which we all have in view, and which I do not hesitate to say is the greatest object which Britons can pursue in what I believe to be a critical stage in Imperial history.

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